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Building Resilience in MBA Students: Bouncing Back and Forward through Challenges

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Abstract

The *raison d'être* for MBA programs is to prepare students to lead and manage effectively in the real world. An overview of the unique challenges awaiting MBAs, however, reveals a blind spot in business education: It doesn't necessarily prepare MBA students to operate effectively in the VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) world of today. This paper suggests that resilience training can help fill the void by enhancing the capacity of MBAs to bounce back and forward through and despite adversity. The objective of the paper is to propose a conceptual design of an evidence-based, relevant, and applicable Resilience Training Program for MBA students, building on research and practice in positive psychology and positive organizational scholarship. The proposed program seeks to enhance MBAs' individual resilience from a 3-dimensional perspective of protecting, promoting, and sustaining mental health and well-being. Topics covered in the program include emotion regulation, cognitive flexibility, optimism, hope, positive emotions, character strengths, positive relationships, meaning-making, high-quality connections, and job crafting. Each of these topics is examined through a review of relevant research, practical implications, and specific interventions for building and strengthening related skills. This paper will hopefully serve MBA students and their business schools in shaping resilient leaders of the future.

Keywords

resilience, well-being, education, adults, managers, positive psychology, optimism, meaning, positive relationships, hope, positive emotions

Disciplines

Adult and Continuing Education | Cognitive Psychology | Educational Psychology | Other Psychology | Training and Development | University Extension

Building Resilience in MBA Students:
Bouncing Back and Forward through Challenges

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University of Pennsylvania

A Capstone Project Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Applied Positive Psychology

Advisor: Meredith Myers, Ph.D.

August 1, 2017

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	3
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	7
The Business Case of Resilience for MBA Students.....	7
The Relevance of MBA Education.....	8
Global Business Challenges for MBAs.....	9
Early Career Challenges for MBAs.....	10
In-the-Program Challenges for MBAs.....	13
Implications for MBA Education.....	14
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW OF RESILIENCE.....	16
The Broader Context of Resilience.....	16
Positive Psychology.....	16
PERMA.....	19
Other Well-Being Models.....	20
Positive Organizational Scholarship & Positive Organizational Behavior.....	22
Theoretical and Scientific Underpinnings of Resilience.....	25
Definitions of Resilience.....	25
Trait vs Process: Resilience is not Fixed.....	28
Protective Factors: Resilience is “Ordinary Magic”	29
Practical Implications: Resilience is Contextual.....	31
Resilience Training Programs: Is Resilience Teachable?.....	32
CHAPTER III: RESILIENCE TRAINING PROGRAM FOR MBA STUDENTS.....	36
Program Overview.....	36
Module I: Building Cognitive & Emotional Resilience (Protecting).....	38
Emotion Regulation & Cognitive Flexibility.....	39
Optimism.....	47
Hope.....	51

Module II: Building Strengths & Assets (Promoting)	54
Positive Emotions.....	55
Character Strengths.....	60
Positive Relationships.....	63
Meaning-Making.....	67
Module III: Building Support Systems (Sustaining)	72
High-Quality Connections (HQCs).....	73
Finding Meaning in Work.....	78
Positive Emotions at Work.....	82
CHAPTER IV LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS.....	85
CHAPTER V CONCLUSION	86
References.....	88
Appendix A.....	111
Appendix B.....	112
Appendix C.....	114
Appendix D.....	118
Appendix E.....	124
Appendix F.....	128
Appendix G.....	130
Appendix H.....	135
Appendix I.....	140
Appendix J.....	144
Appendix K.....	145
Appendix L.....	147
Appendix M.....	149

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The objective of this paper is to provide a conceptual design of a Resilience Training Program for MBA students, based on empirically validated work in the field of positive psychology, focused on skills and capabilities that can be developed, and tailored to the specific challenges of this population. To achieve this, I will first discuss why resilience matters for MBAs, then I will explore the concept of resilience and relevant research, and, based on these insights and observations, I will propose a conceptual framework for a Resilience Training Program, consisting of three modules on protecting, promoting, and sustaining mental health and well-being. Most important, my hope is that this paper will inspire and serve other people in business schools around the world in their efforts to shape resilient leaders of the future who bounce back, evolve, and flourish despite adversity and through adversity. This aspiration reflects more than a purely intellectual curiosity about finding strength and resilience in difficult times. It reflects a personally meaningful connection to this work as I become a better person each time I see the human spirit soar and overcome even the most daunting challenges in life.

The Business Case of Resilience for MBA Students

One third of the world's largest 500 public companies, based on market capitalization, have chief executives who earned an MBA (Financial Times, 2016). The MBA is by far the degree with the most representation among executives and MBA graduates are an important source of future leaders. Data suggest that large numbers of MBA graduates assume managerial roles and many others engage in significant managerial responsibilities. For example, a recent survey of more than 14,000 MBA graduates representing 70 universities and 20 locations worldwide shows that 77% of graduates occupy a mid-level or senior-level position, while additional 13% are in the "C-suite" (i.e. CEO, CFO; GMAC, 2016). Given the career trajectory of MBA students, implying senior management positions and access to high

level of authority and business impact, one would assume that business schools do a good job preparing future leaders for the challenges of an increasingly complex, uncertain, and turbulent world of business. Or do they?

The Relevance of MBA Education

Despite their popularity, MBA programs face escalating criticism and damning concern over their capability to shape leaders who are prepared for and in touch with the “real world” (Rubin & Dierdorff, 2009). Central to these criticisms are questions regarding the relevance of MBA education to real world practice and the ability of business schools to teach management, leadership, and other interpersonal skills (Porter & McKibbin, 1988). More recently, scholars and practitioners have increasingly urged business schools to rethink their approach to management education (Bennis & O’Toole, 2005; Ghoshal, 2005; Mintzberg, 2004; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002; Datar, Garvin, & Cullen, 2010). For instance, Mintzberg (2004) asserts that today’s conventional MBA programs focus on specific functions of business more than on the craft and practice of managing, thus producing functional specialists instead of true managers. Pfeffer and Fong (2002) emphasize a significant misalignment between the mastery of skills acquired in the MBA and their practical relevance in the real world. Bennis and O’Toole (2005) argue that business schools have “lost their way” by refusing to view business management as a profession rather than a scientific discipline. A study of Datar and colleagues (2010), including interviews with 30 business school deans and an equal number of business executives across the globe, reveals that business schools face major challenges as they wrestle with questions of their value proposition and relevance. A core conclusion of the study is that business schools need to rebalance their curricula to focus more on developing the skills, capabilities and techniques that are at the heart of the management practice (referred to as “the doing” component), as well as the values, attitudes, and beliefs that form the worldview and professional identity of

managers (“the being” component). Another study of more than 30 CEOs and HR Managers from large Swiss and international companies representing eight industries suggests that business leaders consider soft skills, including teamwork, leadership, communication, flexibility, creativity, and managerial skills, as key factors for success in business (Muff, 2010). Similarly, Rubin and Dierdorff (2009) investigated the relevance of MBA curricula of 373 schools in relation to managerial competency requirements, relying on an empirically derived competency model from more than 8000 managers across 52 managerial occupations. Their results show that behavioural competences indicated by managers as most salient, such as managing decision-making processes or managing human capital, are least represented in required MBA curricula. In other words, there is a considerable mismatch between the level of importance assigned to these competencies by incumbent managers and the degree to which these same competencies are covered by required course material across MBA programs.

Global Business Challenges for MBAs

If Porter and McKibbin (1988) were right in their claims that business school education does little to prepare managers for their day-to-day realities, schools could address such misalignment by providing training that emphasizes the specific challenges awaiting MBA graduates. But what are these challenges? To start with, MBA graduates are destined to lead in a world classified as *VUCA*: volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. Their everyday reality is already marked by rapid transformations of the workplace, including more flexible roles, accelerating complexity, and economic instability. Increased turbulence and new demands tend to leave leaders exposed and vulnerable (Holden & Roberts, 2004). Research suggests that managerial work is increasingly complex, with variety of demands, fluid role expectations, and rapidly shifting tasks and relationships (Lord & Hall, 2005; Mintzberg, 2009). A number of surveys in Europe and North America show that changes like

delaying, outsourcing, and more flexible and ad-hoc organization structures have extensive impact on middle managers (Holden & Roberts, 2004; Worrall & Cooper, 2004). Worrall and Cooper (2004) observe a raise in managerial insecurity, worsened morale, increased tension in relation to top management, and less impact on decision making. Since the financial crisis of 2008-2009, many managers have both been involved in laying off employees and experienced significant job insecurity themselves. According to Schaufeli and colleagues (2009), employees are increasingly expected to show initiative, to collaborate efficiently with others, to assume responsibility for their own professional development, and to commit to high-quality standards of performance. Essentially, managers can no longer rely on support from predictable organizational structures and social support from colleagues. Instead, they need to manage their work roles and cope with job demands in a much more active way. Changes as these place new burdens on managers who need to constantly orient themselves in the organizational landscape and cope with the various emotional and stress-related pressures of navigating a turbulent business world. Naturally, such exposure to uncertainty and instability generates greater demands on leaders' health and well-being.

Early Career Challenges for MBAs

While understanding the managerial stressors related to current economic and business climate offers insight on how to better prepare MBA students for the real world, it is at least as important to investigate the early career challenges faced by MBA graduates as they re-enter the workforce (see Appendix B). A study of Benjamin and O'Reilly (2011) from Stanford University does exactly that – the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with 55 successful young managers who had recently obtained an MBA in order to identify specific leadership challenges confronting MBA graduates early in their careers. The results suggest that MBA graduates pursuing a managerial career go through three types of transition – role transitions, business transitions, and personal transitions (see Appendix B). *Role*

transitions occurred after a manager took on a new role and moved from individual contributor to first-time manager, managing a larger or more senior team, or switching from leading one functional domain to managing a larger business unit. Through these transitions, young managers learned how to lead new and different types of people and how to rebalance priorities as they assumed responsibility for bigger and more complex units. In this transition, MBA graduates sometimes had to learn through trial and error about new demands, expectations, and leadership practices. *Business transitions* appeared to be less about role and more about context. They often involved leading a significant change in the business, managing organizational change, or handling a major business transition such as turnaround. Finally, *personal transitions* involved personal conflicts, navigating strategic differences with a boss, dealing with ethical dilemmas, and coping with major mistakes or setbacks. Personal transitions were often associated with a significant emotional burden. In fact, during such transitions, some managers chose to leave their jobs typically because they couldn't see a way to resolve a situation and essentially felt powerless. Unfortunately, leaving the situation tended to rob them off the opportunity for deeper learning and self-examination. In contrast, managers who decided to stay and persevere in times of great difficulty accelerated their learning. It appeared that personal transitions triggered a realization among emerging leaders that managing conflicts was an inevitable part of being a leader. Throughout all these transitions, managers experienced challenges that in almost all cases involved struggling with something they had not encountered before, usually a new situation that required them to tackle multiple challenges at once. These challenges often required rethinking and letting go of old assumptions, developing new skills and attitudes, establishing new relationships, managing existing ones, and, most difficult of all, changing one's behavior and self-concept (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011). To the extent young managers could identify which

assumptions and behaviors to leave behind and which new ones to integrate in their lives, they accomplished the learning necessary for navigating important leadership transitions.

In their attempt to understand how to equip MBA graduates for these key transitions, Benjamin and O'Reilly (2011) identified the specific challenges that young managers struggled with, and organized them into two broad categories, *managing others* and *managing oneself*. Challenges managing others included difficulties managing and motivating subordinates, on one hand, and difficulties managing relationships with peers and bosses, on the other hand. Similarly, challenges managing oneself included two sub-themes, developing a leadership mindset and coping with personal setbacks and disappointments (see Appendix B; Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011). For the purpose of this paper, it is particularly revealing to consider MBA early career challenges related to coping with setbacks and disappointments. Most MBA graduates in the study had a proven track record of professional success prior to enrolling in a business school. They had yet to experience major challenges and setbacks that could no longer be fixed by simply working harder or doing more of what they had always done well before. Hence, many of them were surprised when they experienced failures, obstacles, and dilemmas that seemed beyond their control. Examples of such setbacks included surprisingly negative performance reviews, disappointing business results, or corrosive personal relationships. Young managers varied in their responses to these setbacks – many broke down emotionally and lost their confidence, while others refused to assume responsibility and blamed others. Resigning appeared to be another common response to such challenges. Study findings suggest that young managers who lacked appropriate coping skills had a more difficult time learning from their setbacks and failures (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011). Instead of reflecting on their behavior and focusing on what they could do to change the situation, many of them tended to feel powerless and victimized.

Several managers in the study of Benjamin & O'Reilly (2011) seemed to be better equipped for such challenges. Interestingly, these managers weren't smarter than the others, nor did they make fewer mistakes. They were simply hardier and did things that allowed them to recover more quickly and learn from mistakes. Benjamin & O'Reilly (2011) observed that certain similarities between these resilient young managers – they all appeared to better manage their emotions and refrain from impulsive action; they actively sought feedback and social support in times of adversity; and finally, they came to realize that *how* they responded to setbacks was more important than the setback itself. They engaged in personal reflection, embraced their shortcomings, and perceived challenges as inevitable part of their learning. Through this process, young leaders enhanced their personal growth, built strength, and gained the professional maturity required to handle similar challenges in the future.

In-the-Program Challenges for MBAs

As seen above, MBA graduates embark on a professional path that is anything but short of challenges and setbacks. It is however not unusual for MBAs to experience significant challenges even earlier, during the program itself. For many, enrolling in an MBA program marks an important transition of returning to school and being a student again. Such transition can be quite unsettling as it requires establishing oneself among new peers, maintaining self-confidence in a challenging and sometimes competitive environment of equally experienced and successful professionals, and proving one's skills and capabilities in a new arena. MBA programs are typically extremely workload-intense and many times mentally exhausting. They require a daily practice of ruthlessly setting priorities and managing time, sacrificing sleep to long hours of studying, and combatting major work-life difficulties. When the study day is about to end, there are extracurricular activities, networking events, and job hunting. For majority of MBA students, MBA enrolment goes

hand in hand with moving countries, being away from friends and family, and possibly taking care of long-distance relationships with spouses or engaging in their successful integration if they moved along. Additionally, many students are under pressure to land a high-paid job to pay off a sizeable loan, or suffer under the burden of self-imposed expectations to find their “dream job” after the program.

Implications for MBA Education

The *raison d'être* for MBA programs is to prepare students to lead and manage effectively in the real world. Unfortunately, as Pfeffer (2009) asserts, many faculty in business schools tend to prioritize scientific rigor over practical relevance and fail to equip students with the skills, knowledge, and abilities reflecting the complex challenges business leaders face. Drawing on observations concerning key challenges for MBAs throughout their lifecycle as students and managers – from coping with conflicting demands and expectations during the MBA studies to overcoming early career setbacks and managing in an increasingly uncertain world – I posit that, among other essential areas of development, MBA students should benefit from the integration of resilience training into their business school curriculum. Resilience enables individuals to persist in the face of challenges and to bounce back from adversity (Masten, 2001). It may even foster bouncing forward through integrating learning from adverse experiences (Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick, & Yehuda, 2014). It can help people to better manage stress, be more open to new experiences, and make sense of change (Southwick et al., 2014; Luthar, 2006; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004; Masten, Cutuli, Herbers, & Reed, 2009). Not surprisingly, researchers, business practitioners, and leadership experts advocate for building resilience capabilities in the workplace and in management specifically, emphasizing the need for coping with constantly changing and volatile times, disruptions, and setbacks (Luthans, Vogelgesang, & Lester, 2006; Bardoel, Pettit, De Cieri, & McMillan, 2014). Holmberg and colleagues (2016) argue that increased

organizational turbulence puts more pressure on leaders' health and well-being, therefore resilience and individual resources for coping become even more important. Other researchers suggest that preparing today's business students for professional success may be accomplished through proactive development of positive psychological resources such as resilience, hope, efficacy, and optimism, also referred to as psychological capital or PsyCap in research literature (Luthans, Luthans, & Avey, 2014). There is empirical evidence that PsyCap capabilities are not only predictive of academic performance, but also have important implications for the development, retention, and success of business students (Luthans, Luthans, & Jensen, 2012). Some MBA educators have too recognized the crucial role of resilience in building internal capabilities for leadership and change (Hodges, 2017). MBA students themselves have identified resilience as an important component of their training: in a study with executive MBA students from across the globe, they listed resilience as a key capability necessary for leading and managing change, along with other capabilities such as emotional intelligence, flexibility, and reflection and learning (Hodges & Gill, 2015). While business and academia seem to agree over the importance of resilience to personal and professional success and well-being, an examination of the top 15 MBA programs included in the Global MBA Ranking 2017 of Financial Times (Financial Times, 2017) shows that none of them offers courses in resilience.

The intention of this paper, however, is not to add to the debate about the relevance of business school education. Rather, the intention is to turn what seems to be a blind spot in MBA education today into an opportunity for business schools to use resilience training to better prepare MBA students for the experiences they will likely navigate. The following chapter provides a literature review of resilience, including its grounding in the field of positive psychology, various operational definitions, protective factors, and practical implications.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW OF RESILIENCE

The Broader Context of Resilience

Humans have been fascinated with the idea of individual resilience in the face of adversity for a long time, as evident in fairy tales, folklore songs, and myths about heroes and heroines who overcome great challenges (Campbell, 1970). The scientific study of resilience, however, began in the 1960s and 1970s and sprang from the observation that some children at risk for problems and psychopathology were developing quite well and achieved positive developmental outcomes despite exposure to significant adversity (Masten, 2007; Luthar, 2006). Pioneering investigators (e.g. Garmezy, 1971, 1974; Murphy & Moriarty, 1976; Rutter, 1979; Werner & Smith, 1982) recognized the significance of such phenomena for promoting health and preventing problems in the lives of children facing risk. These investigators inspired four decades of research on resilience and investigation of what goes well with people in difficult times. Since resilience research moves away from psychopathology and instead focuses on positive adaptation, human strength, and resources in the face of significant risk or adversity, the study of resilience can be placed within the larger context of positive psychology. Furthermore, investigating resilience as applied to individuals within their organizational settings requires a review of positive organizational scholarship (POS) and positive organizational behavior (POB).

Positive Psychology

Right towards the end of the 20th century, the field of positive psychology emerged and began to place greater emphasis on exploring what was right with people and what contributed to human flourishing and well-being (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, 2011; Peterson, 2006). Such attention to individual and collective thriving starkly contrasted with the prevailing disease model of human functioning which focuses largely on repairing damage and treating pathology. In contrast, positive psychology aims to catalyze a

paradigm shift in the field of psychology from exclusive attention to the worst things in life to building the positive qualities and factors that make life worth living (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

While improving the human condition has been examined since ancient times by thinkers and philosophers like Aristotle and more recently by humanistic and behavioural psychologists such as William James (1890), Abraham Maslow (1954), and Carl Rogers (1959), the scientific inquiry of well-being received increasing attention in the final decades of the last century. Deci and Ryan (1985) investigated a theory of self-determination and motivation, Diener (1984) explored subjective well-being and happiness, Snyder (1994) introduced hope theory, Bandura (1997) engaged in the scientific study of self-efficacy, and Ryff (1989) developed the theory and construct of psychological well-being. The collective efforts of these participants set the ground ready for the formation of what would soon emerge as a new scientific field. A major turning point in formally declaring positive psychology as an organized field of study was Dr. Martin Seligman's presidential address to the American Psychological Association (APA) in 1998. He argued that despite significant progress in treating mental illness, there has been no rise in life satisfaction and we have seen substantial increase in depression, anxiety, and mental health issues (Seligman, 1998; Seligman, 2011). This led Seligman to conclude that the disease model of psychology is insufficient and does not advance prevention of mental health problems. Indeed, major strides in prevention have originated largely from building competency rather than correcting weakness. Prevention researchers have identified that human strengths such as optimism, hope, perseverance, and future mindedness act as buffers against mental illness. The task of psychology in the new century would therefore be to create a science of human health to better understand and learn how to enhance these virtues and positive qualities in preventing illness and promoting health (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Recognizing that the

absence of mental illness is not the same as the presence of mental health, Seligman called for balanced and empirically-grounded research of the psychological factors that enable humans to flourish (Seligman, 1998; Seligman, 2011). Thus, Seligman's tenure as APA president affirmed the importance of positive psychology as the rigorous scientific study of "what makes life most worth living" (Seligman, 1999, p. 562). The idea that the study of disease is only half of psychology's potential inspired a whole new generation of researchers who saw immense opportunity in studying the other, "positive" half, concerned with human well-being (Moore et al., 2015). By focusing on strengths (rather than weaknesses), on resilience and even post-traumatic growth (rather than trauma), and on thriving (rather than surviving), positive psychology deploys empirically-validated theories and evidence-based interventions to investigate what well-being is and how it can be measured and cultivated. But what is well-being?

Although originally grounded in happiness and positive affect, the understanding of well-being has evolved and recent discourse embeds the notion of *eudaimonic* well-being. The ancient Greek term *eudaimonia* is best translated as "flourishing" and suggests the full flowering of human life (Moore et al., 2015). Such clarification is important as it suggests that well-being is more than just positive emotions; rather, it implies thriving across multiple life domains. In contrast to happiness, well-being entails a more complex and nuanced perspective on flourishing: it integrates both hedonic well-being (feeling good) and eudaimonic well-being (functioning well; Moore et al., 2015). The concept of *eudaimonia* was first proposed by Aristotle (c. 350 BCE) who argued that living a virtuous life in alignment with reason and highest virtues was the pathway to well-being (Melchert, 2002). There have been different definitions of well-being in the field of positive psychology, with researchers adding dimensions such as meaning, autonomy, competence, social connectedness, self-actualization, self-acceptance, authenticity, and mindfulness (Baumeister

& Vohs, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Huta & Ryan, 2010; Seligman, 2011). The following section reviews key conceptual frameworks of well-being, grounded in theoretical and empirical evidence.

PERMA

Seligman's (2011) well-being theory suggests a five-pillar model of human flourishing, commonly known as PERMA: Positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. The rationale behind these elements is that each of them meets the following criteria: it contributes to well-being, people pursue it intrinsically (not as a means to any of the other elements), and it is defined and measured independently of the other elements (Seligman, 2011). While no pillar alone defines well-being, each contributes to it. Positive emotion refers to the hedonic part of well-being (feeling good) and is associated with subjective measures such as happiness and life satisfaction. Positive emotions are a central component in well-being, however, in his revised theory of well-being Seligman (2011) refers to them as "the pleasant life", suggesting that they alone cannot lead to eudaimonia. Engagement refers to "flow", a term coined by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) to describe a state of optimal experience characterized by effortless attention, deep involvement, and loss of self-consciousness. Flow occurs at the intersection of challenge and skills, often entails the pursuit of some goal, and results in a more complex sense of self. As an element of well-being, flow implies an engagement in activities that challenge us to develop skills, use our strengths, and actualize our potential. Positive relationships, Seligman (2011) argues, are crucial for our success as *Homo sapiens*. The life-enhancing power of healthy, positive relationships with others is one of the most important elements in well-being and perhaps the crux of positive psychology. Their significance is best captured by Christopher Peterson, one of the founders of positive psychology, who suggested that positive psychology could be summed up in three simple words: "Other people matter" (Seligman,

2011; Peterson, 2006). Meaning, in Seligman's (2011) words, implies belonging to and serving something larger than the self. Finally, accomplishment represents a shift in Seligman's (2011) thinking for it enabled him to recognize the role of intrinsic motivation. Sometimes people pursue goals and engage in activities for their own sake and for no other reason. This element implies accomplishment for accomplishment's sake, in other words, it suggests that satisfaction derived from achievement itself is a big enough driver and motivating factor of human behavior. Including the element of accomplishment in PERMA emphasizes the *descriptive*, rather than prescriptive, nature of positive psychology. As Seligman (2011) posits, adding this element by no means suggests that people should orient their path to well-being towards achieving more; rather, it reflects that people voluntarily choose to seek excellence for its own sake.

Other Well-being Models

Well-being is a complex construct and there is no universal agreement on what it consists of and how it can be operationalized. Along with Seligman's (2011) PERMA, there are other theoretical and empirical models of well-being that offer valuable perspective and rich nuances to human flourishing. In her framework of psychological well-being, Ryff (1989) suggests and operationalizes six dimensions of well-being: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Her research findings suggest possible health benefits related to living a purposeful and meaningful life, continued personal growth, and quality connection to others. At the same time, Ryff and Singer (2006) caution against rigid formulations of eudaimonic well-being, emphasizing that even dimensions of well-being such as personal growth and purposeful living can be taken to harmful extremes. Thus, they advocate for balance in understanding well-being both from a conceptual and empirical perspective.

Philosopher Martha Nussbaum (1993) offers another theoretical framework of flourishing. According to her, to live well, it is necessary to exercise what she calls “functional capabilities” and actualize one’s potential through them. These include living a full life span, having good physical health, ability to avoid pain and enjoy pleasure, using the five senses and mind, having healthy attachments to others, ability for moral reasoning, engaging in social interactions, caring for the natural world, enjoying recreational activities like laughing and playing, and living one’s own life in one’s own context. Such perspective of well-being implies fulfilling one’s physical, psychological, and social needs and exercising agency. Importantly, Nussbaum (1993) recognizes the importance of external conditions necessary for human flourishing, such as social networks, economic opportunities, political freedom, and possibilities for self-expression.

More recently, Huppert and So (2013) developed a conceptual framework of well-being that combines hedonic and eudaimonic components, that is, feeling well and functioning effectively. Their conceptual definition of flourishing suggests that flourishing could be conceived as the very opposite of disorder, rather than its mere absence. With this idea in mind, they conducted a systematic examination of symptoms of common mental disorders among a sample of 43,000 Europeans and identified the positive pole of each symptom dimension. As a result, they constructed a model of well-being including the following elements: competence, emotional stability, engagement, meaning, optimism, positive emotion, positive relationship, resilience, self-esteem, and vitality (Huppert & So, 2013).

Finally, Prilleltensky and colleagues (2015) suggest a model of flourishing which transcends individual well-being and encompasses community well-being, while also affirming the importance of environmental and contextual factors. They propose an empirically-grounded multidimensional model of well-being which incorporates

interpersonal, community, occupational, physical, psychological, and economic well-being, represented in what they called the I COPPE scale (Prilleltensky et al., 2015). The significance of this model lies in the multidimensional view of well-being and the recognition that, to understand well-being, we need to place it in the context of a larger social and environmental infrastructure necessary to enhance and sustain well-being itself.

As it can be seen from this brief overview of various conceptual frameworks of well-being, there is a significant overlap between flourishing concepts. This may reflect the fact that new well-being constructs are often derived from the integration of previous frameworks (Ryff, 1989). At the same time, such overlap may also suggest that there is an increasing theoretical and empirical validation of what constitutes flourishing. These theoretical frameworks of well-being have greatly served the purpose of this paper by informing my research on resilience through the lens of optimal human functioning. In view of the primary objective of this paper – to propose a resilience-building training program for MBAs – it is necessary to explore optimal functioning of individuals from a systemic perspective, in other words, how individuals function and flourish within their organizations. Therefore, the next section reviews the concepts of Positive Organizational Scholarship and Positive Organizational Behavior which have provided additional grounding for the conceptual framework of the Resilience Training Program.

Positive Organizational Scholarship and Positive Organizational Behavior

Optimal human functioning as applied to organizations and their individuals has shaped a new approach to studying positive outcomes, processes, and attributes in organizational settings, known as Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS; Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003). POS doesn't represent a single theory, rather, it is an umbrella concept that builds on perspectives and scientific evidence from other domains such as positive psychology, positive sociology, and organizational development. It seeks to

understand dynamics, typically described by words such as excellence, virtuousness, abundance, or flourishing, and related to the best of human condition in individuals and organizations (Cameron et al., 2003). As a field of study, POS encompasses topics such as job crafting, resilience, flow, engagement, quality relationships, creativity, and well-being.

Exploring the meaning of the three concepts in the label *positive organizational scholarship* offers further insight into the nature of POS. *Positive* reflects an orientation towards phenomena that represent positive deviance from expected patterns (Cameron et al., 2003). POS asks, what makes a team or an organization not just healthy, but thriving? Not just profitable, but abundant? Not just coping, but resilient? In other words, POS emphasizes states, dynamics, and outcomes that are exceptional, virtuous, and life-giving. *Organizational* implies a focus on states and processes that occur within organizations. To do that, POS draws on research from organizational theories and aims to shed light on phenomena that are often ignored within organizational studies, such as crafting meaningful work through individual “callings”, focusing on strengths in employee development, and fostering high-quality connections between members of an organization. Put simply, POS explores different mechanisms through which organizational dynamics can produce extraordinary outcomes for individuals, groups, and organizations (Cameron et al., 2003). Finally, *scholarship* indicates a commitment to the scientific method. POS is grounded in the systematic, rigorous, and evidence-based inquiry of positive phenomena and aims to develop theory and research in service of practice (Cameron et al., 2003).

Inherently linked to POS is the emerging field of positive organizational behavior (POB) which focuses on the study of human strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and managed to improve performance in the workplace (Luthans, 2002). Although more clarification and distinction is needed between POS and POB, the following criterion help differentiate between the two: (1) POB emphasizes improvement to

performance, whereas POS focuses on constructs such as compassion, gratitude, and virtue as ends in themselves; and (2) POB includes state-like concepts such as self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resiliency, rather than stable, trait-like qualities and virtues such as strengths, empathy, altruism, and goal orientation (Luthans, 2002).

Particularly relevant to this paper is a core construct of POB, referred to as *psychological capital* (PsyCap). As it is considered part of POB, PsyCap meets the following criteria: it is grounded in theory and research, it can be measured, it is state-like and thus entails a developmental perspective, and it demonstrates a positive impact on workplace performance. PsyCap consists of four components, reflected in the acronym HERO: (1) Hope, defined as striving and persevering towards goals, and, when necessary, finding alternative pathways to goal attainment; (2) Efficacy, in other words, having confidence in one's own ability to take on challenges and put in the necessary effort to succeed; (3) Resilience, seen as sustaining through difficulties, and bouncing back and beyond to achieve success; and (4) Optimism, operationalized as making positive attributions about succeeding now and in the future (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007). This operational definition differentiates PsyCap from “what you have” (economic capital), “what you know” (human capital), “who you know” (social capital), and suggests that PsyCap consists of “who you are” and, most importantly from a developmental perspective, “what you can become” (Luthans, Luthans, & Luthans, 2004; Luthans & Youssef, 2004). PsyCap has been empirically linked to various positive outcomes, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, performance (both work performance and academic performance), and employee well-being, while at the same time it has been negatively associated with undesirable attitudes such as stress, anxiety, cynicism for change, and turnover intentions (Avey, Reichard, Luthans, & Mhatre, 2011).

While the review of positive psychology, POS, and different theories of well-being help place resilience in a wider context and understand its theoretical underpinnings, the next section of this chapter explores the concept of resilience in greater detail and provides key research findings that serve as a foundation for the conceptual design of the Resilience Training Program for MBAs.

Theoretical and Scientific Underpinnings of Resilience

Definitions of Resilience

As we have seen, positive psychology encourages a shift from repairing of deficiencies to building of strengths that preserve and promote well-being. In this context, resilience is a growing area of interest among researchers and practitioners in the field of positive psychology. In fact, it is not just researchers and practitioners who are enthusiastic about the subject. A quick look at Google Trends (Google Trends, 2017) reveals a clear pattern of increasing public interest in resilience: internet searches for “resilience” have quadrupled over the past 13 years (from January 2004 to June 2017) and show a steady uptrend since 2004. General management magazine Harvard Business Review (Harvard Business Review, 2017) released seven robust articles on resilience only in the past two years. A vivid example of increasing engagement with the topic is Sheryl Sandberg’s and Adam Grant’s (2017) recently published book on resilience, *Option B*. Within a month of its release, the book ranked among the top 3 most sold books on Amazon (Amazon, 2017), and within less than two months, the online Option B Community on Facebook (Facebook, 2017) has gained more than 350 thousand followers. With resilience becoming a ubiquitous topic, there is always a risk that its meaning becomes fuzzy. Thus, it is more important than ever that attempts to enhance resilience in oneself and others is preceded by understanding its theoretical and scientific underpinnings.

Numerous definitions of resilience have been proposed in the psychology research literature over the past four decades. Resilience is a complex construct that may be defined differently in the context of individuals, families, communities, organizations, and society. At the individual level, resilience is most commonly associated with the ability to bend but not break, bounce back from adversity, and perhaps even grow in the face of difficult life experiences (Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick, & Yehuda, 2014). The American Psychological Association (2017) defines resilience as “the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress — such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems or workplace and financial stressors” (para. 4). Masten and colleagues (2009) define resilience as “patterns of positive adaptation during or following significant adversity or risk” (p. 3), emphasizing a developmental systems approach. Furthermore, Masten (2001) coins the phrase “ordinary magic”, arguing that resilience is a “common phenomenon arising from ordinary human adaptive processes” (p. 234). In other words, if these basic adaptive processes and systems are protected and function well, human development will be robust despite severe adversity. Others see resilience as a “stable trajectory of healthy functioning after a highly adverse event” (Southwick et al., 2014, p. 2). It is also proposed that resilience is not about bouncing back from adversity, but rather about moving forward with a sense of a more integrated self and with insights derived from an adverse experience (Southwick et al., 2014). Importantly, resilience refers to positive adaptation not only in situations of significant adversity, but also in the context of everyday stressors and common life transitions (Gillham et al., 2013).

Despite differences in operationalizing the construct of resilience, most definitions are grounded in two kinds of judgements: *adversity* and *positive adaptation* (Masten, 2001). For resilience to be demonstrated, there must be a significant *adversity* that threatens normative development. There isn't a universal definition of adversity in the context of resilience. Some

researchers link adversity to the notion of risk and negative circumstances that bring about adjustment difficulties. Others define it as any suffering linked to difficulty, misfortune, or trauma. Moreover, adversity doesn't always manifest itself as a major disaster; instead, it can be represented by daily stressors and highly taxing yet common events (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). The second judgement, *positive adaptation*, implies that the quality of adaptation in response to adversity is evaluated as "good" or "OK" (Masten, 2001). Here again, there are many questions on defining what "good" means in this context. For some researchers, good adaptation is reflected in the absence of psychopathology, whereas for others, it implies accomplishing salient developmental tasks, relevant to age and socio-cultural context. A related issue is whether resilience should be defined on the basis of external criteria such as academic achievement or internal criteria such as healthy psychological functioning, or both (Masten, 2001). More recently, some researchers have expanded the definition of resilience, suggesting that resilience may not only be reactive, but also proactive. They call this reaching out - seeking new challenges, developmental opportunities, and connections to others in the pursuit of a richer, more meaningful, and fulfilling life (Reivich & Shatté, 2002). Similarly, Sandberg and Grant (2017) propose that people can not only experience post-traumatic growth after adversity (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995), but they could possibly experience *pre-traumatic* growth too, in other words, they could build resilience for future challenges. Although not empirically tested, such notion is particularly important in resilience training as it implies that resilience programs may serve functions related to both preventing mental problems and promoting health. In other words, resilience training may not only enhance individual capacity for coping with future adversities, but also stimulate personal growth and improve human functioning even in the absence of adversity.

Trait vs Process: Resilience is Not Fixed

One of the greatest challenges in defining resilience is to specify whether resilience is being viewed as a trait, a process, or an outcome. Researchers tend to use the term interchangeably to refer to each of these, and as a result, there are discrepancies in conceptualizations of resilience in psychology literature (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). Confusion regarding defining resilience as a trait versus a process partially derives from literature on ego-resiliency, a construct developed by Jeanne and Jack Block (1980) that refers to a personal characteristic. Ego-resiliency is considered a personality trait that reflects general sturdiness of character and flexible and integrated functioning in times of stress (Luthar et al., 2000). While one can be ego-resilient by definition, that doesn't imply the experience of adversity. In contrast, the term resilience is used to refer to a dynamic process that presupposes the experience of significant adversity. Resilience, as a process, arises from dynamic interactions within and between the individual and the environment and may change over time as a function of this interaction (Masten, 2001). Luthar and colleagues (2000) suggest two major differences between ego-resiliency and resilience: First, ego-resiliency is a personality trait of the individual, whereas resilience is a dynamic developmental process that occurs in the interaction between the individual and the environment; and second, ego-resiliency does not entail exposure to a significant risk or adversity, whereas resilience does. What adds additional confusion to the debate is that even scholars who conceptualize resilience as a dynamic process (e.g. Masten et al., 1990; Rutter, 1993), use the term "resilient children". Such phrase may be misleading as it may imply that resilience is a personal attribute, akin to intelligence or empathy, whereas the intention of these researchers is to suggest that there are two conditions at hand – the presence of significant risk to the child's development and evidence of positive adaptation despite adversity (Luthar et al., 2000). Commenting on issues of confusion, Masten (1994) points out that scientific

representations of resilience as a personal trait may imply that some individuals simply lack “what it takes” to overcome adversity. Such perspective is not only misinformed and unwarranted, but also doesn’t advance the understanding of underlying processes of resilience and the design of appropriate interventions for individuals facing adversity (Masten et al., 1990).

The developmental perspective of resilience as a dynamic process has important implications for practitioners: the nature of resilience is not fixed (Masten & Garmezy, 1985; Masten, 2001; Masten et al., 2009). As a landmark 40-year longitudinal study of Kauai children exposed to adversity reveals, resilience is an interactive process and new vulnerabilities and strengths often emerge in interaction with the environment and changing life circumstances (Werner & Smith, 1982). Similarly, Luthar and colleagues (2000) suggest that resilience is a process that evolves throughout the entire life cycle and new behaviors of coping and adaptation are learned over time. Furthermore, findings from a literature review study of the impact of resilience among older adults indicate that even for people in later stages of their lives there are opportunities to build and demonstrate resilience, regardless of socioeconomic background, personal experiences, and social environments. Thus, while the debate on resilience as a process versus a trait remains as a relevant research topic, prevailing perspectives emphasize that resilience is an adaptive process that can be developed. Such view on resilience is significant because it suggests that resilience is a largely malleable phenomenon, and as such can be developed through interventions.

Protective Factors: Resilience is “Ordinary Magic”

A central objective of resilience research is to identify the protective factors and underlying mechanisms that moderate the negative effect of adversity on developmental outcomes. Protective factors are these characteristics or processes that modify the effects of risk in a positive direction (Luthar, 2006). Protective factors are also defined as the “qualities

of the individual or the individual's environment that buffer against risk factors and contribute to positive development" (Gillham & Reivich, 2010, p. 17). Findings from decades of research on resilience in children and youth converge on a set of specific factors that are consistently associated with positive adaptation and development in times of stress and adversity. These factors have been grouped into three major categories – child characteristics, family characteristics, and community characteristics (Yates & Masten, 2004). At the child level, some of the most salient characteristics include cognitive skills, effective problem solving, self-regulation, a sense of meaning, self-efficacy, and positive self-perception (Masten et al., 2009). In the family and close social circle, examples of protective factors include positive attachment relationships, supportive and competent adults, authoritative parenting (high on warmth, structure / monitoring, and expectations), and organized home environment. Protective resources in the community derive from high-quality educational milieus, nurturing teacher-child relationships, public safety, and neighborhoods with "collective efficacy" (Yates & Masten, 2004; Masten et al., 2009). Beyond children and youth, commonly reported protective factors for adults include self-regulation, cognitive flexibility, problem-solving, self-efficacy, internal locus of control, sense of meaning, optimism, humor, emotional intelligence, empathy, spirituality, and positive relationships with others (Luthar, 2006; Wolin & Wolin, 1993; Yates & Masten, 2004; Masten et al., 2009).

Consistent with the developmental approach towards resilience, researchers recognize that there isn't one single pattern of positive adaptation and different routes may lead to the same outcome (Yates & Masten, 2004). In this context, empirical research increasingly focuses on identifying the protective processes (versus protective factors) that underline resilience. Masten (2001) makes a compelling argument that these processes are not extraordinary – resilience is not a magical attribute of the lucky few. To the contrary, it is

commonly accessible and rooted in basic adaptational systems. Such systems include, for example, the attachment system (relationships with others give us a profound sense of emotional security and stability), self-regulatory system (being aware and in control of emotion, arousal, and behavior), and mastery motivation system (interacting successfully in the environment is a powerful driver of self-efficacy and resilience; Southwick et al., 2014). Masten's (2011) argument implies that resilience-enhancing strategies and interventions will be most effective when they tap into these basic, but powerful adaptational systems (Masten, 2001). One such example is provided by the mastery motivation system (Masten et al., 2009). When the functioning of this system is protected and maintained, individuals continuously learn about the environment and master new skills. These mastery experiences generate feelings of self-confidence and self-efficacy, which in turn make people persist in the face of failure (Bandura, 1997).

Practical Implications: Resilience is Contextual

These findings from research on resilience suggest three major strategies for fostering resilience through prevention and intervention programs: risk-focused strategies, asset-focused strategies, and process-focused strategies (Masten et al., 2009). *Risk-focused strategies* are designed to reduce risk and stressors that may threaten normative development. In the context of MBAs, such strategies may include support programs to reduce the stress of career transitions, burnout prevention programs, and organizational efforts to manage the economic crisis. *Asset-focused strategies* aim to build strengths and increase access to resources that encourage positive development, such as skills training and modelling, mentoring programs, and effective employee assistance. Finally, *process-focused strategies* are those that mobilize adaptive systems and facilitate protective processes of positive human development. As mentioned earlier, these adaptive systems are a simple, but powerful driver of resilience processes. Examples of such strategies include leadership training for young

managers, offering opportunities for mastering new skills and experiencing success at work, and encouraging peer relationships through social activities.

Within a resilience framework, successful prevention and intervention programs focus on the strengthening of individuals, as well as of their broader context, including family and community (Southwick et al., 2014; Yates & Masten, 2004; Luthar, 2006). Natural adaptive systems like family and community are powerful engines of individual resilience because one's own attributes are often dependent on processes in their proximal environment. Strong and supportive relationships are not only a basic human need; they are critical for achieving and sustaining resilient adaptation because positive connection with others is at the core of healthy psychological development (Luthar, 2006). Hence, resilience programs may require a different approach from context to context and such work requires a proper understanding of what is meaningful in each particular context (Southwick et al., 2014).

Finally, a developmental perspective of resilience implies that interventions should focus on shaping positive developmental pathways, as well as on sustaining them over time (Yates & Masten, 2004). Resilience is a dynamic process and being resilient at one point of time doesn't guarantee resilience at another, just as being resilient in one domain of life doesn't imply resilience across all domains. Thus, a resilience framework advocates for interventions across the lifespan, not just in early childhood.

Resilience Training Programs: Is Resilience Teachable?

If resilience is not a fixed trait, nor magic that requires extraordinary qualities, can we then build resilience through training? The current understanding is that resilience is enabled through ordinary processes, many of which are teachable (Masten, 2001; Reivich & Shatté, 2002; Seligman, 1998). This section of the paper aims to shed more light on the effectiveness of existing resilience training by presenting key empirical findings from some of the most researched resilience programs.

The Penn Resiliency Program (PRP; Gillham, Reivich, & Jaycox, 2008; Gillham, Brunwasser, & Freres, 2008; Gillham et al., 2007) is one of the most largely researched depression prevention programs for youth. Designed as a school-based prevention program for youth, built on cognitive-behavioral interventions, the purpose of PRP is to enhance resilience, prevent depression, and improve overall well-being. The protective factors targeted in PRP are emotion awareness and regulation, impulse control, cognitive flexibility, realistic optimism, self-efficacy, and strong relationships (Gillham & Reivich, 2010; see Appendix C). A meta-analysis of 17 controlled studies of PRP shows that program participants report significantly lower levels of depressive symptoms through at least one year following the intervention, compared with a control group that received no intervention (Brunwasser, Gillham, & Kim, 2009). Additionally, research evidence suggests that PRP can reduce anxiety and conduct problems (Gillham et al., 2006). A study of Li Peng and colleagues (2014), exploring the effects of the PRP program among Chinese medical students, reports similar findings: Compared with the results prior to the training, low-resilience students showed significant increases in resilience, positive emotion, and cognitive appraisal scores after the training.

The curriculum of the Penn Resilience Program served as a foundation in designing the U.S. Army Master Resilience Trainer (MRT) course (Reivich, Seligman, & McBride, 2011). The 10-day MRT course provides face-to-face training in resilience skills to sergeants and trains them to teach these skills to their soldiers, adopting a “train the trainer” model. In addition to topics covered in PRP, the MRT program incorporates other empirically validated concepts such as signature strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), cultivating gratitude (Emmons, 2007), and enhancing relationships through capitalization and active-constructive responding (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004). The Master Resilience Training has been offered to soldiers since 2009, however few studies have examined its training effects. A

descriptive study of Griffith and West (2013), based on online questionnaires completed by soldiers after their training, indicates self-reported changes related to increased self-awareness, strength of character, optimism, mental agility, and connection with others. Results also suggest that soldiers perceived the MRT training as helpful and useful in developing their resilience competences.

Another program that has been researched is the Program for Accelerated Thriving and Health (PATH), aimed at increasing resilience and thriving in undergraduates by teaching adaptive explanatory styles (Gerson & Fernandez, 2013). Empirical findings indicate that the program had significant positive impact on undergraduates' sense of personal control, explanatory styles, and thriving, while also reducing depressive symptoms among participants (Gerson & Fernandez, 2013).

Despite many studies on resilience, most of them have focused on children and youth at risk or individuals with specific adverse circumstances, like military personnel, and there is less research on promoting resilience in adults and investigating the effectiveness of resilience training (Burton, Pakenham, & Brown, 2010). In an attempt to fill this gap, a study of Burton and colleagues (2010) offers findings on the feasibility and effectiveness of a 22-hour group resilience training program called READY, developed to promote resilience and psychological well-being in adults at the workplace, and delivered over 13 weeks. The program targets five protective factors - positive emotions, cognitive flexibility, social support, life meaning, and active coping – and interventions are based on acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) and cognitive behavior therapy. The results show significant improvement effects in measures of mastery, positive emotions, personal growth, mindfulness, stress, self-acceptance, autonomy, and cholesterol levels (Burton et al., 2010).

Similarly, a study of the Promoting Adult Resilience (PAR) program, designed as a 7-week strengths-based program for building resilience in adults, reports greater optimism,

increased work satisfaction and work vigour, and reduced stress among participants at a 6-month post-intervention follow-up (Lioussis, Shochet, Millear, & Biggs, 2009). PAR is designed as a multifaceted prevention program that focuses on individual factors to improve adult resilience and encourages participants to apply the skills taught in the program both at work and home.

While PAR attempts to build resilience in adults who are exposed to stress but healthy in general, there are resilience programs that specifically target employees suffering from burnout-related illness. A study of Steensma, Den Heijer, and Stallen (2007) investigates the effect of a 6-month training program conducted among 20 Dutch employees with the main objective to increase their resilience and facilitate reintegration at work. Results indicate improvements on effective coping styles, social support seeking, and higher resilience, in combination with less avoidance and passive reactions (Steensma et al., 2007).

Finally, a systemic review of 14 work-based resilience interventions, investigating the impact of resilience training on personal resilience and employee wellbeing in the workplace, suggests that resilience training may be a useful means for enhancing mental health and subjective well-being (Robertson, Cooper, Sarkar, & Curran, 2015). The systemic review shows that most programs in the study utilize a cognitive-behavioral approach to developing resilience. Participants in the programs represent various professional occupations, including sales managers, police officers, executives and senior managers from a public health service agency, human service professionals, nurses, and university administrative staff. In addition to improving resilience and well-being, findings indicate that resilience training is associated with wider benefits such as improved psychosocial functioning and increased performance. Protective factors covered across the 14 programs in the study include emotion regulation, impulse control, problem solving, optimism, causal analysis, empathy, flexibility self-efficacy, personal strengths, conflict resolution, goal-setting, and strong relationships

(Robertson et al., 2015). Importantly, Robertson and colleagues (2015) clarify that while findings indicate that resilience training may be effective in enhancing personal resilience, this is not always the case and effectiveness of the training may depend on the nature of the training, including variables such as guiding definition of resilience, validity of measures, intervention content, length, and delivery. In terms of intervention length, the systemic review reports varying duration with no available evidence regarding possible link between longer programs and better results. It also suggests that individualized programs offering one-on-one support seem to yield beneficial results.

Findings from these studies suggest that resilience can be enhanced through training. While intervention effectiveness may vary, there is a good reason to believe that at least some resilience skills are teachable and developable across the lifespan. Building on these findings, Chapter III provides a conceptual framework for the MBA Resilience Training Program and makes recommendations for practical interventions to cultivate a resilient mindset and skills.

CHAPTER III: RESILIENCE TRAINING PROGRAM FOR MBA STUDENTS

Program Overview

This part of the paper builds on findings discussed so far and proposes a conceptual design of a Resilience Training Program for MBA students. Insights on existing gaps in business education, together with analysis of major challenges faced by MBAs throughout their professional life span, from students to junior managers and established leaders, informed the selection of relevant areas for resilience development. Based on various conceptualizations of resilience, the definition that guides this training entails *persevering and sustaining an integrated sense of self in the face of challenges, bouncing back from adversity, and even bouncing forward towards well-being*. Such perspective implies a developmental view of resilience as a process and, importantly, it suggests a pro-active aspect of resilience as a capacity to grow, reach out, and move forward towards a more fulfilling

life. In this sense, the Resilience Training Program serves both *preventive and promotive functions* – it aims to prevent mental illness and to promote well-being at the same time. The program is grounded in the evidence-based assumption that resilience is not fixed (it's developable), is ordinary (it doesn't require super powers), contextual (it's not isolated from environmental factors such as social support), and teachable through interventions (it can be trained).

The scope of this paper includes an outline of a Resilience Training Program for MBA students, in other words, it aims to suggest what topics (protective factors) should be included in such training, how they relate to resilience, what positive outcomes they are associated with, and what evidence-based interventions may be included for the development of related skills. Three key criteria have guided the selection of protective factors: (1) they are *empirically-validated asset of resilience* - there is substantial evidence that these factors contribute to developing and strengthening resilience; (2) *they are developable* – research findings indicate that these factors are associated with skills that can be cultivated and enhanced through training and practice; and (3) they are *relevant to the target audience* – they address challenges and stressors that are common to MBA students.

Informed by these considerations, the Resilience Training Program proposed here focuses on a subset of protective factors targeting individual resilience from a 3-dimensional perspective of *protecting, promoting, and sustaining* mental health and well-being (see Appendix A). These factors are grouped into three main categories, based on their signature contribution to one of the three dimensions:

- **Module I, Building Cognitive & Emotional Resilience (Protecting):** emotion regulation, cognitive flexibility, optimism, and hope.
- **Module II, Building Strengths & Assets (Promoting):** positive emotions, character strengths, meaning-making, and positive relationships.

- **Module III, Building Support Systems (Sustaining):** building support systems that sustain individual resilience through relationships, meaning, and positive emotions in the workplace.

The suggested duration of the program is 9 days in total, split in 3 modules of 3 days.

This design is proposed due to the commonly used and effective modular course structure in MBA programs, and it is also in line with the MBA program structure at Business School Lausanne, Switzerland (Business School Lausanne, 2017), where this program will be put in place. The program will include 75 hours of in-class training in total (3 modules x 25 class hours per module) with the possibility to include pre-course and post-course assignments as necessary. The structure of the Resilience Training Program suggests a consecutive module sequence as each module builds on knowledge and skills covered in the previous one.

Finally, it is important to indicate that the main objective of this paper is to build the conceptual backbone of an evidence-based Resilience Training Program for MBA students, therefore program elements such as detailed training outline, teaching methods, and delivery approaches, although of critical importance for the effectiveness of the intervention, are left outside the scope of this paper.

Module I: Building Cognitive & Emotional Resilience (Protecting)

The first module of the program, Building Cognitive & Emotional Resilience, encompasses protective factors that act as buffers against the negative effects of stress and adversity. This module is grounded in using cognition for enhancing resilience and derives from the work of the Penn Resilience Program, the U. S. Army Master Resilience Training, Arron Beck (1976), Albert Ellis (1962), Martin Seligman (1999), and Reivich and Shatté (2002). In line with Masten's (2001) view that basic human adaptation systems are the foundation for developing resilience, this module touches on self-regulatory systems for emotion and cognition. It aims to equip participants with applicable skills for emotion

regulation, flexible and accurate thinking, optimism, and hope. In the context of the Resilience Training Program for MBAs, developing these skills is a first step of building individual resilience as they serve a primary protective function in relation to well-being in times of stress and adversity. It is necessary to include a caveat on the choice of skills in this module: Even though self-efficacy, the belief and confidence in one's personal agency (Maddux, 2009), frequently appears as a protective factor for resilience in psychological literature, it has been only implicitly included in the Resilience Training Program. Since self-efficacy, by definition, can be most effectively enhanced through mastery and performance experiences (Bandura, 1982), the hope and expectation of this program is that it will equip participants with the necessary skills to overcome difficulties, make meaningful changes in their lives, and attain goals, thus strengthening their sense of self-efficacy as a consequence and by-product of real-life mastery and performance experiences.

Emotion Regulation & Cognitive Flexibility

The core competences in this section include: (1) emotion regulation, defined as the ability to identify one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, and to regulate impulses, and (2) cognitive flexibility, in other words, thinking accurately and flexibly, challenging existing beliefs and coming up with new ones (Reivich, Seligman, & McBride, 2011).

ABC model. Cognition or thinking is key for enhancing resilience (Reivich & Shatté, 2002; Masten et al., 2009; Masten, 2001; Southwick et al., 2014; Gillham et al., 2013). Our thoughts shape the way we view the world and build patterns of behavior. Cognitions are critical to appraising events as stressful or non-stressful and to determining subsequent adaptation (Ellis, 1962). Therefore, becoming aware of how our thoughts influence our feelings and actions is the first step in building resilience. The notion that our evaluations and interpretations of events influence how we are impacted by these events is central to resilience training and builds on Ellis's (1962) ABC model (Reivich, Seligman, & McBride,

2011). The model posits that people feel and react differently to the same event because of their individual beliefs about that event. ABC stands for activating event (A), beliefs about the event (B), and consequences (C). According to the model, the activating event is not the direct cause of the consequences (emotions and behaviors) we experience. Rather, it is our thoughts and beliefs about the activating event that mediate its impact on our emotions and behaviors (Ellis, 1962; 1991; 2004). The ABC model of Ellis (1962), later revised as ATC (activating event, thoughts, and consequences) by Reivich and Saltzberg (personal communication, January 14, 2017), offers a structured way of identifying the link between thoughts and feelings / behaviors, understanding the impact of cognitions on emotions, and discovering beliefs that may color the interpretation of events inaccurately (Reivich & Shatté, 2002). By mindfully processing thoughts and beliefs, one can better navigate challenges and disappointments and enhance one's well-being.

The role of cognitions on emotional reactions was further elaborated by Dr. Aaron Beck (1976). He observed that depressed people tend to view their past, present, and future more negatively, and such biased perceptions consistently color their experiences as negative, resulting in damaging self-perceptions such as being worthless or not being loved. Through his work, Beck (1976; Beck et al., 1979) came to realize that cognitions cause emotions, and emotions impact one's ability to remain resilient and not succumb to negative experiences (Reivich & Shatté, 2002). He developed a new approach to treating depression and anxiety, called cognitive therapy, which helps people overcome depression by changing their thinking and dislodging negative cognitive biases. This approach is incorporated in a number of resilience training programs, including the Penn Resilience Program (Gillham, Reivich, & Jaycox, 2008) and the U.S. Army Master Resilience Training (Reivich, Seligman, & McBride, 2011).

Learning the skills to detect counterproductive thoughts when faced with stress may be extremely important for MBA students as their career path entails frequent emotionally-charged situations at work, including values dilemmas, interpersonal conflicts, increasing work pressure, and difficult relationships with subordinates and bosses. In such situations, some MBAs feel so powerless that they choose to leave their jobs, avoiding self-examination and missing an opportunity to derive learning from their experience (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011). Furthermore, a study of early career challenges of managers with an MBA degree suggests that everyone among the most resilient young leaders appeared to engage in some form of emotional regulation (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011). Even though setbacks triggered strong emotional reactions in these managers, they refrained from making rash decisions or acting impulsively, and took time to decompress and distance themselves from their emotionally-tensed surroundings. From this perspective, practicing ABC can make a meaningful difference to MBAs because it equips them with the skills to detect beliefs and thought patterns that fuel maladaptive emotional reactions in times of stress and challenges (see Appendix D).

Cognitive biases and thinking traps. Making the connection between thoughts, feelings and behaviors is the first step of changing counterproductive thoughts and boosting resilience. It is also important to evaluate the accuracy of these thoughts, especially because we tend to fall into certain mental fallacies (Reivich & Shatté, 2002). There is more information circulating around us that we could possibly analyze. Evolutionarily, we have found an adaptive mechanism that allows us to cope with such mental overload – we use heuristics, or mental shortcuts, in order to be functional human beings (Reivich & Shatté, 2002). Mental shortcuts work until they don't work anymore. In fact, these mental shortcuts hamper our ability to accurately assess situations and/or individuals, especially in times of stress and adversity (Reivich & Shatté, 2002). They illuminate our cognitive biases such as

confirmation bias (we tend to interpret information in a way that confirms our preconceptions), hindsight bias (we tend to think that past events were as predictable at the time they happened as they are now), and optimism bias (we tend to overestimate favourable and pleasing outcomes; Kahneman, 2011). Another common bias is the negativity bias which causes us to give greater weight to negative entities, including thoughts, emotions, and experiences (Rozin & Royzman, 2001). As Baumeister and colleagues (2001) argue, “bad is stronger than good.” The implication of the negativity bias is that, even when we face positive and negative events of the same intensity, we are more affected by negative events. Cognitive biases such as the confirmation bias or the negativity bias act as optical illusions for the mind and result in inaccurate assessment of the world around us.

Inaccurate and inflexible thinking causes us to miss or overlook important pieces of information and thus prevents us from bouncing back from everyday challenges or larger adversities. Reivich and Shatté (2002) suggest a list of common thinking traps, including: jumping to conclusions (making assumptions without relevant data), mind-reading (belief in knowing another’s undisclosed thoughts), personalization (self-blaming regardless of evidence), externalization (blaming others regardless of evidence), maximizing/minimizing (failing to give proper weight to evidence), overgeneralization (forming global beliefs on the basis of a single situation), tunnel vision (not seeing the overall picture, often based on a negativity bias), and emotional reasoning (drawing conclusions based on one’s emotional state, rather than evidence). Thinking traps impede our ability to make accurate judgments about the world and thus undermine our resilience in challenging times.

Research indicates that we can learn to avoid thinking traps by challenging the accuracy of our thoughts and evaluating their usefulness through mental cues and questions (Reivich & Shatté, 2002). Examples of such questions include “What is the evidence?” (for jumping to conclusions), “What can I say or ask to increase my understanding of the

situation?” (for mind-reading), “How did others or circumstances contribute to what happened?” (for personalization), “How did I contribute to what happened?” (for externalization), “Am I dismissing the importance of other factors?” (for maximizing/minimizing), “Is there a specific behavior that explains the situation?” (for overgeneralization), “What other important pieces of information might be there?” (for tunnel vision), and “Are my feelings accurately reflecting the facts of the situation?” (for emotional reasoning; Reivich & Shatté, 2002). Challenging the accuracy of our thoughts is an example of demonstrating cognitive flexibility because it helps us to generate alternative interpretations of stressful events (see Appendix D).

In the MBA context, the capacity to recognize thinking traps can help young managers to avoid internalization of expectations and demands. A study of mid-level executives (Bossmann, Ditzen, & Schweitzer, 2016) reveals that they often encounter dilemmas caused by contradictory requests such as achieving ambitious targets under constant time and performance pressure, on one hand, and being supportive and appreciative leaders who consider their employees’ needs, on the other hand. Similarly, business profit must be generated short-term *and* long-term. New production processes must be compatible with the past *and* oriented to the future. Internalizing such conflicting expectations as strict and inflexible rules can lead to counterproductive reactions such as denial, fighting, resignation, and despair. Thus, the ability of managers to identify inconsistencies, question their own assumptions about conflicting demands, and assess dilemmas from different perspectives can enable them to navigate such paradoxes more successfully.

Iceberg beliefs. Sometimes, despite practicing ABC and enhancing the accuracy of our thinking, we are surprised by our own reactions whose magnitude and intensity cannot be explained by our automatic thoughts. Reivich and Shatté (2002) suggest that in those moments we face what they call *iceberg beliefs*, deeply-held, underlying beliefs about the

world and our place in it. Iceberg beliefs are general rules about how the world should be and how we should operate within it (Reivich & Shatté, 2002). While some beliefs are adaptive and support optimal functioning, there are others that may undermine our effectiveness in responding to challenges and may even be detrimental to our well-being. Examples of such beliefs include always wanting to be loved or successful, believing that asking for help is a sign of weakness, insisting that the world should be fair, or avoiding conflicts at all costs. The potential harm of these underlying beliefs consists in biased interpretations of events – we sometimes don't assess events as they are, but according to our fixed, deeply-rooted beliefs. Here again, the confirmation bias prompts us to notice and remember evidence that confirms our iceberg beliefs and screen out contradictory information, which reinforces these beliefs even further. As iceberg beliefs can become activated at any time, without our awareness, they can trigger reactions and emotions that are out of proportion or mismatched to the situation. Sometimes, we can have conflicting iceberg beliefs (e.g. "I must be in charge" and "I can rely on others"), which impedes decision making and moving forward through challenges. For example, MBAs, as young managers, frequently face contradictory demands related to balancing competition and cooperation among peers, being there for others at work and at home, solving problems independently and coaching and developing others (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011). Thus, identifying these beliefs and changing them when they are not serving them well can be critical to personal and professional success.

Reivich and Shatté (2002) classify common iceberg beliefs into three general themes: achievement, acceptance, and control. Exploring achievement-related beliefs is particularly relevant for MBA students for whom achievement, ambition and success are a powerful driving force. It is not uncommon that MBAs set high standards for themselves and experience great difficulty overcoming mistakes and failures (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011). Oftentimes, MBAs also suffer from self-imposed demands for perfectionism, another

common theme for achievement-oriented people (Reivich & Shatté, 2002). Beliefs such as “Anything less than perfect isn’t any good” may lead to tunnel vision, one of the thinking traps, causing preoccupation with imperfection and resulting in paralyzing behavior such as procrastination and avoidance.

The reason why it is important to identify iceberg beliefs is that they drive our behavior, thus detecting these beliefs is key for making effective behavioural change and for gaining control over our emotions and behaviors. Reivich and Shatté (2002) suggest a process of reflective inquiry through open questions that facilitate identifying iceberg beliefs. Once iceberg beliefs are detected, they need to be evaluated in terms of their accuracy, meaningfulness, rigidity, and usefulness so that one can decide whether these beliefs support or undermine optimal functioning and resilience.

Challenging beliefs through ABCDE. Identifying thought patterns, thinking traps, and iceberg beliefs can significantly enhance resilience as it enables us to have a fuller and more accurate picture of ourselves. The next step is to determine what we can change in order to improve our optimal functioning. Our willingness and capacity to revisit our beliefs, change them, and generate new ones, in other words, our cognitive flexibility, plays a key role in resilience (Reivich and Shatté, 2002). Seligman (1998) builds on Ellis’s (1962) ABC model and extends it to ABCDE, adding D for disputing one’s beliefs and E for energizing the outcome of redirected beliefs. It is in the practice of disputation that we can enhance our cognitive flexibility and learn to assess causes of events and future implications in alternative ways. Seligman (1998) suggests four strategies of effective disputation: *collecting evidence*, *generating alternatives*, *evaluating implications*, and *assessing usefulness*. One of the most effective techniques in disputing existing beliefs is to search for evidence of their validity. Reivich and Shatté (2002) warn that confirmation bias doesn’t make it easy for us to generate contrary evidence as we are used to screen out information that doesn’t validate our

preconceived ideas. For this reason, they argue, it is important to intentionally look for evidence both for and against each belief (see Appendix D). The purpose of such exercise is not to automatically convert negative thoughts to positive thinking, rather, it is about increasing accuracy of our thinking, often blinded by our own cognitive biases and beliefs (Seligman, 1998). For example, for an MBA student who has experienced disappointing performance review and as a result believes he/she has failed (“I am a failure at work”), the process of coming up with evidence would entail collecting factual information that supports and contradicts the statement of “I am a failure at work”. Are all elements of the performance review with a low score? Are there areas where s/he was evaluated well? Has s/he received other recent feedback besides the performance review? Are there work projects that have gone well? Generating alternative explanations of causes of events is another effective strategy for disputing beliefs. Seligman (1998) suggests scanning all possible contributing causes and focusing on the *changeable* (asking the manager for more frequent feedback throughout the year to catch early signs of performance concerns), the *specific* (this work year was particularly hard due to several complex work projects), and the *nonpersonal* (many competing demands and not enough support) causes. In addition to disputing beliefs about past events, Seligman (1998) suggests that a revisit of our beliefs regarding the implications of adverse events. In the example of the MBA student, what does a disappointing performance review mean for his/her future? Often, we tend to catastrophize, in other words, we tend to dwell on worst-case scenarios (Seligman, 1998). Catastrophizing can increase anxiety and paralyze action (Reivich, Seligman, and McBride, 2011). To counteract catastrophizing, Reivich and Shatté (2002) suggest a simple tactic of noting down worst-case scenarios and then generating best-case scenarios and most-likely scenarios. For the MBA student, the worst-case outcome of receiving a poor performance review may be getting fired, the best-case scenario may be continuing work as before without any major implications, and

the most-likely scenario may be working with the support of the manager to advance in areas marked as critical. Finally, Seligman (1998) proposes that the usefulness of beliefs about the past and the future be carefully examined – is a certain belief we hold onto helpful or destructive, does it support or impede optimal functioning, is it useful in a particular situation or not. For example, is it helpful for the MBA student to live with a belief that s/he is a failure, and does focusing on such belief empower him/her or makes him/her feel like a victim without a choice? The ABCDE process is then completed with energizing revisited beliefs and generating new solutions, based on reassessment of our thinking and its accuracy (Seligman, 1998).

Learning the skills of emotion regulation and cognitive flexibility can help MBA students strengthen their resilience by becoming more aware of how their thoughts affect their emotions and behaviors, more accurate in their cognitions, more flexible in seeing alternative possibilities and solutions, and ultimately, better prepared to rise to personal and professional challenges. These skills, being both learnable and teachable (Reivich & Shatté, 2002; Seligman, 1998; Reivich, Seligman, and McBride, 2011), illuminate the essence of resilience as a developmental process as opposed to a fixed personality trait: We can get better at resilience through interventions and skills development that tap on some of our most basic yet powerful adaptational systems (Masten, 2001).

Optimism

Optimism has been commonly identified as a key protective factor for resilience (Seligman, 1998; Reivich, Seligman, & McBride, 2011; Gillham et al., 2013; Luthar, 2006; Robertson et al., 2015; Luthans, Vogelgesang, & Lester, 2006). In psychological research, *optimism* is defined as having hopeful expectations that good things will occur in one's life (Carver, Scheier, & Fulford, 2009; Scheier & Carver, 1993). Such positive expectations are associated with higher subjective well-being, even in times of stress and adversity (Carver et

al., 2009). A 37-year longitudinal study of repatriated prisoners of war shows that optimism was the strongest predictor of resilience and facilitated recovery from trauma (Segovia, Moore, Linnville, Hoyt, & Hain, 2012). Optimism has been shown to have a positive effect on the psychological well-being of people facing health crisis as well as among caregivers of people suffering from difficult medical conditions (Carver et al., 1993; Given et al., 1993). Several studies reveal that optimists tend to have different coping strategies than pessimists: Optimists focus more on approaching and solving problems, positively reframing difficulties, and accepting reality (Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 2001). Similarly, a study of AIDS patients shows that optimists appeared to use less self-blame, fatalism, and avoidance, and instead were more prone to seek information, make plans for recovery, and accept unchangeable situations (Taylor et al., 1992). These findings suggest that optimists tend to cope better with adversity – they try hard to resolve problems that can be resolved, while acknowledging adversity. In contrast, pessimists appear more likely to distance themselves from problems, use more avoidance coping, and persist less in times of difficulties (Carver et al., 2009). Beyond the context of adversity, optimism has been linked to lower risk of depression, greater marital satisfaction, better physical well-being, and higher levels of motivation, achievement, and productivity (Gillham, Shatté, Reivich, & Seligman, 2001; Schulman, Castellon, & Seligman, 1989). In the realm of positive organizational behavior (POB), optimism is a component of psychological capital (PsyCap), a construct linked to positive outcomes at the individual and organizational level such as engagement, commitment, job satisfaction, performance, stress reduction, and greater capacity for organizational change (Luthans, Avey, Avolio, & Peterson, 2010).

Consistent with the definition of optimism as hopeful expectations for the future, Seligman (1998) links optimism to the ways in which people habitually explain events in their lives. This approach is based on the idea that people's expectations for the future stem

from their interpretations of the past (Peterson & Seligman, 1984). It also implies that expectations for the future significantly influence people's actions and experiences (Carver et al., 2009). According to Seligman (1998), there are three dimensions of explanation – permanence, pervasiveness, and personalization. *Permanence* reflects the temporal dimension of how people think of adversity – pessimists tend to believe that bad events will persist and will always affect them, whereas optimists see adversity as temporary. The *pervasiveness* dimension determines if people see the causes of bad events as universal and spread across different domains of life, or as specific and related to one particular domain. Finally, *personalization* indicates if people internalize or externalize bad events, in other words, if they believe that they are the cause of bad events or not. Pessimists tend to blame themselves and perceive adversity as their fault, whereas optimists attribute negative events to other people or circumstances outside of their control (Seligman, 1998). Thus, people with an optimistic explanatory style attribute problems in their lives to temporary, specific, and external (as opposed to permanent, pervasive, and internal) causes (Seligman, 1998).

Optimistic explanatory style has been associated with lower risks of depression and better physical health (Buchanan & Seligman, 1995), as well as with a number of work-related positive outcomes such as increased performance, productivity, employee well-being, and job satisfaction, along with reduced turnover rates (Seligman & Schulman, 1986; Proudfoot, Corr, Guest, & Dunn, 2008). In contrast, according to the learned helplessness model, individuals with a pessimistic explanatory style (“It’s going to last forever”, “It will undermine everything I do”, and “It’s my fault”) are more likely to display helplessness when confronted with challenges than individuals with an optimistic explanatory style (Seligman & Schulman, 1986; Seligman, 1998). These findings are pertinent for MBA students whose career trajectory presupposes repeatedly encountering a multitude of challenges, complex business and interpersonal problems, and professional setbacks (Lord & Hall, 2005;

Mintzberg, 2009; Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011). Furthermore, studies suggest that young managers effectively cope with stress when they know and accept their limitations and at the same time focus on solving problems within their control (Bossmann et al., 2016). MBA students can therefore benefit from learning the skill to differentiate between what they can and cannot change, and focus on those things that are specific and malleable.

As evidence on optimism and explanatory style suggests, optimists tend to cope with adversity better than pessimists – they see challenges as temporary, specific, and external, approach problems by actively making plans and seeking solutions, and persist in the face of challenges. Importantly, Seligman (1998) proposes that optimism can be learned through challenging a possibly limiting and counterproductive explanatory style. Since explanatory style is oftentimes associated with patterns of thinking and iceberg beliefs, it can hinder resilience, therefore it is important to become aware of one's primary explanatory style and work towards more flexibility around the three dimensions of permanence, pervasiveness, and personalization (Reivich, Seligman, & McBride, 2011; Reivich & Shatté, 2002).

Learning the skills to do that entails cognitive-behavioral techniques for (1) identifying self-defeating beliefs when faced by adversity, (2) evaluating the accuracy of these beliefs along the three dimensions of explanatory style, and (3) if one's beliefs are discarded or questioned, replacing them with more accurate and constructive beliefs (see Appendix E). The logic behind these techniques is that they enable people to correct negative distortions in their minds (Carver et al., 2009). It is important to recognize, though, that the ultimate goal is flexible optimism, combined with accuracy, as opposed to blind optimism (Seligman, 1998; Reivich & Shatté, 2002). In other words, learning optimism implies increasing both the accuracy and flexibility of our thinking about causes and implications of bad events, and not merely substituting optimistic thoughts for pessimistic ones. It is when we have a more adequate picture of the reality, combined with cognitive flexibility of seeing beyond our

deeply-rooted patterns of thought, explanatory style, and biases, that we have a greater choice of possibilities for steering through adversity and for thriving (Reivich & Shatté, 2002).

Hope

Hope is another core construct frequently associated with resilience (Luthar, 2006; McLeod et al., 2016; Reivich & Gillham, 2010; Yates & Masten, 2004). Although many people think of *hope* as simply wishful thinking reflected in the phrase “hoping for the best” in times of difficulty, as a psychological concept it is defined as perceived capability to conceptualize goals, develop the specific strategies to achieve those goals (pathways), and find and sustain motivation for acting on those strategies towards goal attainment (agency; Snyder, 2002). According to Snyder’s (2002) conceptualization of hope, goals are defined broadly as anything that individuals desire to do, get, and be. *Agency* represents an individual’s motivation achieve certain goals, while *pathways* reflect an individual’s perceived ability to produce strategies and contingency plans in order to overcome obstacles (Luthans, Luthans, & Avey, 2014). In other words, hope consists of both willpower (agency) and waypower (pathways; Luthans & Jensen, 2002). Although pathways and agency are two distinct components of hope, they are functionally inseparable and operate in a combined, iterative process to generate hope (Peterson & Byron, 2007). For example, a manager may think of many different ways to improve unit performance (pathways), but may not be motivated to take any of these paths, or vice versa. Thus, both dimensions – willpower and waypower – must be present for someone to be considered as a high-hope individual. Another important clarification in defining hope is that, although fiction writers and the general public typically see hope as an emotion, Snyder (2002) emphasizes the cognitive process in hope theory. He proposes that one’s perceptions about the success of goal pursuits (or the lack thereof) influence emotions, and in turn, emotions reflect self-perceptions of how one is doing in goal pursuit.

Research on hope suggests that children, adolescents, and adults with higher levels of hope have better health, better problem-solving skills, and are more adjusted psychologically (Snyder, 2002; Snyder, Cheavens, & Michael, 1999). Hope is positively related to academic, athletic, and health outcomes, as well as growth from adversity (Tennen & Affleck, 1999). Studies of hope-enhancing interventions suggest that increases in hope are associated with substantial decrease in anxiety and depressive symptoms (Klausner et al., 1998). Particularly relevant to the workplace and the professional context of MBAs are findings showing that high-hope individuals appear to be more certain of their goals and challenged by them, value progress towards goals, adapt better to environmental change, and experience less anxiety, especially in stressful situations (Snyder et al., 2000). A review of four studies on hope reveals the role of hope in job performance: More hopeful sales employees, mortgage brokers, and management executives demonstrated higher job performance, and higher-hope management executives produced more and higher-quality solutions to work problems (Peterson & Byron, 2007). These findings are consistent with Snyder's (2002) hope theory which posits that hopefulness provides individuals with the motivation (agency) and the means (pathways) to persist at accomplishing their goals even when confronted with problems and obstacles (Peterson & Byron, 2007). Higher-hope individuals are able to generate more strategies to reach their goals and design contingency plans in case of obstacles along the way (Snyder, 2002).

High-hope people describe themselves as flexible thinkers who can easily find alternative routes, unlike low-hope people (Snyder, 2002). This is pertinent for MBA students as studies show that perceived lack of alternatives is one of the most common factors aggravating experienced stress at work (Bossmann et al., 2016). Furthermore, research shows that more hopeful individuals interpret success and failure differently than those who are less-hopeful and are more likely to view obstacles as challenges which allows them to redirect

agency towards new pathways (Snyder et al., 1991; Snyder, 2002). They are also more likely to use negative feedback towards adjusting their strategies for goal attainment in the future, while low-hope individuals tend to react by ruminating and experiencing self-doubt (Snyder, 1999; Michael, 2000). Another study with important implications for MBA students indicates that high-hope leaders have more profitable work units and better satisfaction and retention rates among subordinates, compared with their lower-hope counterparts (Peterson & Luthans, 2003). The results of the study suggest that a leader's level of hope may be a significant predictor of work-unit performance, and employee retention and job satisfaction.

If hope is a particularly important psychological resource for MBAs, can it be developed? Evidence suggests that hope is malleable and can be enhanced through cognitive-behavioral interventions (Snyder, 2000; Klausner et al., 1998; Cheavens et al., 2006, Feldman & Dreher, 2012; Magyar-Moe & Lopez, 2015). A central tenet of hope theory (Snyder, 2000) is that hope is inherently related to goal attainment through pathways and agency, so it is not surprising that prevailing approaches for enhancing hope include setting reasonable goals, contingency planning, and when needed, re-goaling (Lopez et al., 2004; Luthans & Jensen, 2002; Snyder, 2000). In the context of hope, setting specific goals and developing multiple pathways for each goal can significantly increase agency thinking. Importantly, hope-enhancing strategies may include reflecting on obstacles that could possibly hamper these strategies (pathways), as well as producing alternative routes around the obstacle (Magyar-Moe & Lopez, 2015; see Appendix F). This approach is consistent with research suggesting that making if-then plans, in other words, specifying an anticipated critical situation and generating a relevant goal-oriented response, facilitates goal attainment (Gollwitzer & Oettingen, 2011). Such contingency planning enables individuals to preventively and proactively develop strategies in the event of obstacles and sustains motivation during ongoing goal striving.

Other strategies for accentuating hope include vicarious experience of hope through narratives of fictitious and real characters (Magyar-Moe & Lopez, 2015). Individuals can use such narratives to derive learning from the experience of others such as how others set goals, develop strategies for their attainment, overcome barriers to goals, generate alternatives, and achieve desired outcomes. Similarly, writing brief stories about past and current goal pursuits can enhance hope (Magyar-Moe & Lopez, 2015). Such personal narratives can enable individuals to learn about their own patterns of hope and realize that they have the resources to make positive changes in their lives.

The protective factors included in this section – emotion regulation, cognitive flexibility, optimism, and hope – serve as a baseline for protecting mental health and well-being in the context of adversity. Specific interventions and recommendations for activities related to these protective factors are listed in the appendices of this paper and include ABC practice, identifying thinking traps, explanatory style exercise, and goal setting with contingency planning. The next section covers Module II of the Resilience Training Program and emphasizes the importance of a longer-term perspective of resilience through building assets and resources.

Module II: Building Strengths & Assets (Promoting)

The second module of the Resilience Training Program for MBAs, Building Strengths & Assets, reflects the importance of moving beyond protecting towards *promoting* well-being. It incorporates empirically-validated concepts from positive psychology such as positive emotions, character strengths, meaning-making, and positive relationships. While each of these components plays a significant role in developing and demonstrating resilience, their pursuit is arguably worthwhile even in the absence of resilience. The idea of building strengths and assets as part of the Resilience Training Program is consistent with the

extended definition of resilience as a process encompassing not only bouncing back from adversity, but also bouncing forward towards greater well-being.

Positive Emotions

There is a growing body of research on the effects of positive emotions on individuals, however, for the purposes of this paper, positive emotions will be reviewed from the perspective of their adaptive function in times of stress. More than two decades ago, Lazarus, Kanner, and Folkman (1980) suggested that in highly stressful situations, positive emotions may provide an important “psychological time-out”, buttress continued coping efforts, and restore resources depleted by stress. Since then, these ideas have been tested and supported empirically by a number of researchers (Bonanno & Keltner, 1997; Fredrickson et al., 2003; Tugade, Fredrickson, & Barrett, 2004; Zautra, Johnson, & Davis, 2005). Primary findings from both theoretical and empirical work indicate that positive emotions promote flexible thinking and problem solving (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005), facilitate adaptive coping (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000), counteract the physiological effects of negative emotions (Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998), build and sustain social resources (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2001), and trigger upward spirals of well-being (Fredrickson, 2000).

Barbara Fredrickson’s (1998, 2001) *broaden-and-build* theory of positive emotions provides a valuable framework for understanding the role of positive emotions in the context of coping with negative experiences. The theory posits that positive and negative emotions have distinct and complementary adaptive functions. Whereas negative emotions tend to narrow the scope of our thoughts and actions (preparing us for a flight or fight response), positive emotions appear to broaden our mindscape and behavioural repertoire. By consequence, recurrent experiences of positive emotions can build important psychological, mental, social, and physical resources (Fredrickson 1998, 2001).

There are at least three ways in which positive emotions facilitate positive adaptation in times of adversity: They buffer the negative effects of stress, help us to recover more quickly, and build psychological resources for coping (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2007; Fredrickson, 2001). Research suggests that the experience of positive emotions when faced with challenges may contribute to stress resistance, and therefore adaptation, by interrupting the cycle of ongoing negative emotions (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2007). Positive emotions act like a reset button which allows us to undo the cardiovascular effects of negativity (Fredrickson, 2001). It is thus not surprising that individuals with greater resilience are more likely to capitalize on positive emotions when coping with adversity. For example, they frequently use humour as a coping strategy (Wolin & Wolin, 1993), practice positive reappraisal and benefit finding in negative events (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000), engage in relaxation (taking time to reflect on problems), exploration of alternative solutions, and hopeful, optimistic thinking as means of regulating negative emotions (Werner & Smith, 1992). In addition to offsetting the immediate negative effects of stress, positive emotions may also facilitate adaptive recovery from stressful life events (Fredrickson et al., 2003; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). Specifically, several laboratory studies found that positive emotions were linked to faster cardiovascular recovery from negative arousal (Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998; Fredrickson, 2001). Additionally, returning to cardiovascular baseline levels was partially mediated by the experience of positive emotions in the midst of distress (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004), which is in alignment with Masten's (2000) definition of resilience as experiencing positive outcomes despite adversity. These findings have particular importance for MBAs who are likely to have high-pressure, demanding, and stressful jobs. From the perspective of resilience, positive emotions play another significant role in coping with adversity – they can broaden one's scope of thought and induce more creative and flexible thinking (Fredrickson, 2001). Positive emotions thus enable people to see the big

picture (as opposed to focusing on a fight-or-flight response) and make them more open-minded and perceptive of creative solutions to their troubles. They also lead people to engage in new activities, develop new skills, and initiate more positive social interactions. Over time, this broadened mindset might become habitual and thus represents an important psychological resource that can be drawn on in times of difficulty (Fredrickson, 2001).

For MBAs, the broadening effect of positive emotions can make a meaningful difference to their capacity to remain poise and composure under pressure, as well as their ability to generate creative and flexible solutions in stressful situations. Indeed, the jobs of MBAs often require exactly that – making sound decisions in a turbulent and highly ambiguous environment. If they train the capacity to deploy positive emotions in the midst of managerial dilemmas, they may be better equipped to avoid the negative effects of feeling overwhelmed, depleted, and mentally exhausted. For example, a study of middle managers indicates that finding appreciation in the situation, despite difficulties, is a commonly used and effective resilience strategy (Bossmann et al., 2016). Another study of the effect of emotions in negotiations demonstrates that individuals who ride on positive emotions and display a cooperative and friendly spirit make the best business deals. Likewise, a study of Staw and Barsade (1993) shows that managers with greater positivity were both more accurate and careful in decision-making, and more effective interpersonally. These findings suggest that positive emotions may have both a protective and restorative function – they guard individuals from negative emotions as well as “undo” the aftereffects of such emotions. Furthermore, they point to a possibility that positive emotions may be one of the underlying mechanisms by which high-resilient people resist and recover from stressful events, and achieve positive outcomes despite adversity (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2007).

Savoring. Taken together, these insights have practical implications in the context of resilience training as they can point to effective interventions for enhancing resilience. For

example, *savoring* – the capacity to direct attention to, appreciate, and enhance positive experiences (Bryant & Veroff, 2007) – has been empirically associated with psychological well-being, especially for people with lower resilience (Smith & Hollinger-Smith, 2015). In other words, both high- and low-resilient people report higher happiness, lower depression, and greater life satisfaction; when they have a greater capacity to savor positive experiences, however, this relationship appears stronger for people with lower levels of resilience. These findings suggest that the ability to capitalize upon positive experiences may compensate for insufficiencies in other areas important to resilience, such as optimism, hope, and social support. Results of this study are consistent with Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory and indicate that savoring positive experiences leads to increased feelings of positive emotions and a broader repertoire of thoughts and behaviors (Smith & Hollinger-Smith, 2015). Furthermore, savoring is positively associated with other elements of well-being such as self-reported optimism, internal locus of control, and self-esteem, and negatively related to hopelessness and depression (Bryant, 2003). Since savoring may be experienced from three different temporal dimensions – reminiscing about past positive experiences, savoring positive experiences in the present moment, and anticipating future positive experiences (Bryant & Veroff, 2007) - the Resilience Training Program for MBAs can incorporate various interventions that touch on these three dimensions (see Appendix G). Such interventions may include mentally reliving memorable past experiences or creating a savoring photo album (reminiscing), focusing attention on sensory experiences such as mindful eating or taking time to celebrate good news (savoring in the present), and indulging in positive visual imagery for future events (anticipating; Lyubomirsky, 2007). These techniques can effectively prolong the experience of positive emotions and can benefit physical and psychological health (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2007). For MBAs, an enhanced capacity to savor the present moment may facilitate a greater ability to celebrate success of

others, a commonly experienced leadership challenge for post-MBA young managers (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011).

Gratitude and Kindness. In addition to savoring, the positive effect of activities focused on cultivating gratitude, such as counting one's blessings in life or writing a letter of gratitude, has found a robust empirical support (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). In the context of resilience, the ability to appreciate one's life circumstances may be an adaptive coping strategy for reinterpreting challenging or negative life events (Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003; see Appendix G). Indeed, evidence suggests that traumatic memories have less frequency and intensity in individuals who are regularly grateful (Watkins, Grimm, & Kolts, 2004). Although it may be challenging to feel gratitude during personal adversity like loss or serious illness, it is these precisely these moments when activating a sense of gratefulness may help individuals to adjust and move on (Lyubomirsky, 2007). Similarly, performing acts of kindness has been shown to increase psychological well-being and reduce negative symptoms even in difficult situations (Della Porta & Lyubomirsky, 2012; Lyubomirsky, 2007). Providing assistance to others can offer a welcome distraction from one's own troubles as it shifts the focus to someone else. Additionally, being kind and generous with others is related to more positive self-perceptions (viewing oneself as a compassionate and altruistic person), as well as to greater sense of usefulness, optimism, and confidence (Lyubomirsky, 2007). More importantly, doing acts of kindness fosters a sense of interdependence, cooperation, and support in one's social community, thus implying that in times of need, one could also rely on support from others.

This brief overview of strategies for enhancing positive emotions through savoring, cultivation of gratitude, and performing acts of kindness, demonstrates the usefulness of

positive emotions in coping effectively with negative experiences and reaching positive outcomes even in the face of adversity (see Appendix G).

Character Strengths

Including the topic of character strengths in the Resilience Training Program for MBA students reflects the program's objective to not only protect, but also promote well-being. Character strengths are widely considered to be the building blocks of human flourishing, and the importance of identifying and using them is a foundational concept of positive psychology (Peterson, 2006). *Character strengths* are largely stable, universal personality traits that reflect the core of who we are as human beings through our thoughts, feelings, and actions (Niemiec, 2013). A commonly used framework of character strengths is the VIA Classification system, developed by leading researchers in the field of positive psychology, Peterson and Seligman (2004), as a result of an extensive historical review and analysis of virtues and positive qualities. The VIA Classification contains 24 strengths of character, organized under six core virtues - wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence – found across religions, cultures, nations, and belief systems (see Appendix H). An individual's top, or "signature", strengths are the ones that are most essential to who we are (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Character strengths are researched extensively and there is a robust body of scientific evidence of the various positive outcomes associated with their use, such as life satisfaction, achievement, health, and wellness (Niemiec, 2013). In particular, deploying one's signature strengths in new and unique ways is related to increased happiness and decreased depression at a six-month follow-up (Seligman et al., 2005). Using signature strengths is also linked to increased work satisfaction, greater well-being, and higher meaning in life. Evidence suggests that a possible mechanism for the beneficial effects of using signature strengths may be that

they help us make progress towards our goals and meet our basic needs for independence, connection with others, and competence (VIA Institute, 2017).

Importantly, character strengths can buffer against the negative effects of vulnerabilities and stress (Niemiec, 2013). For example, character strengths such as hope, kindness, social intelligence, self-regulation, and perspective, are shown to diminish the psychological impact of stress and trauma (Park & Peterson, 2009). Furthermore, evidence suggests that posttraumatic growth appears to correspond with particular character strengths: improved relationships with others (kindness, love), increased appreciation of life (appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, zest), openness to new possibilities (curiosity, creativity, love of learning), enhanced personal strength (bravery, honesty, perseverance), and spiritual development (spirituality; Peterson et al., 2008; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995; Niemiec, 2013). These findings suggest that identifying one's key values and leveraging character strengths can enable individuals to overcome challenges and build the life they want to live. Thus, character strengths are considered a protective factor in the context of resilience (K. Reivich, personal communication, March 26, 2017).

Aware-Explore-Apply. In view of this, it would be relevant for the Resilience Training Program for MBAs to include activities related to identifying one's character strengths and developing strategies for leveraging these strengths to overcome obstacles and reach goals. The VIA-based *Aware – Explore – Apply* model (VIA Institute, 2017; see Appendix H) provides a structured and effective way for this purpose. Becoming aware of one's strengths is the first step, based on the assumption that most people do not have a meaningful awareness of their strengths. The second step includes a deeper observation, examining one's life, and self-reflection with the aim of connecting to one's strengths from the perspective of past and current strength use, as well as future use of strengths. Here, individuals can also reflect on how they use strengths differently across various life domains,

and can also generate a list of previous successes, mapping out the character strengths that were used in those situations. The last step entails putting strengths to practice in intentional ways that may enhance one's capacity to overcome challenges and improve well-being. This phase could involve identifying future stressful events, challenges, or stretch goals, and developing an action plan for using signature strengths towards more effective coping and goal attainment (Niemiec, 2013). Because the career path of MBA students presupposes leadership and management roles, it can be particularly insightful for them to explore what character strengths shape their leadership style and how they can leverage on their strengths to become more effective leaders. Furthermore, MBAs can discuss how they can cultivate strengths associated with developing successful teams and group interactions, such as teamwork, fairness, and leadership (Niemiec, 2013).

GROW. In addition to the Aware – Explore – Apply model, another useful framework for using strengths towards achieving meaningful goals or solving problems is the *GROW* (Goals, Reality, Obstacles/Options, Way Forward) model, developed by Alexander Graham and popularized by Whitmore (2002). It involves setting goals, evaluating the reality in relation to the gap between current and desired state, identifying obstacles and options (pathways) that might be taken to work around barriers, and finally, translating options into actions steps towards achieving the goal (see Appendix H). Given the fast changing economic and business environment in which MBAs function, they can use this model to make contingency plans and proactively identify strategies for overcoming potential obstacles. Research suggests that making such if-then plans facilitates goal attainment (Gollwitzer & Oettingen, 2011). Furthermore, generating alternative pathways can produce a greater sense of confidence and readiness to act in times of stress and turbulence.

Positive Relationships

Positive relationships with others are not only regarded as a central concept of positive psychology and various well-being theories, but also they have been consistently found to predict good adaptation in the context of risk (Masten et al., 2009; Southwick et al., 2014; Luthar, 2006; Yates & Masten, 2004). In fact, Luthar (2006) suggests that resilience rests, fundamentally, on relationships. The desire to belong is a basic human need and positive connections with others are at the core of psychological development. Positive, healthy relationships with others give us a profound sense of emotional security. Some researchers even suggest that good relationships with others may be the single most important source of life satisfaction and emotional well-being across different cultures and ages (Reis & Gable, 2003). A vast 75-year longitudinal study on human flourishing, one of the longest studies ever conducted in human development, concludes that close relationships are the greatest predictor of both well-being and physical health (Vaillant, 2012). It also suggests that those individuals who displayed effective defence mechanisms throughout their lives demonstrated capacity for emotional warmth and connection to others despite difficult upbringings or individual setbacks. Several other studies have also unequivocally shown that close relationships are significantly related to well-being and health. For example, large-scale epidemiological studies have shown that social isolation is linked to a substantial increase in all-cause mortality risk (Berkman & Syme, 1979). In terms of well-being, it has been well established that close relationships are associated with happiness and life satisfaction (Diener & Seligman, 2002; Berscheid & Reis, 1998).

Furthermore, relationships with others have been studied from the perspective of social support during times of stress. It has been suggested that social relationships buffer the effects of stress on mental health (Cohen & Syme, 1985; Sarason, Sarason, & Pierce, 1990). When considering the role of social support, it is important to recognize that it has been

defined differently in psychological literature, and most commonly appears under three major conceptualizations: *structural support* (number of social ties or their density), *enacted or received support* (actual support transactions in response to stressful events), and *perceived support* (perceived availability of support) (Gable & Gosnell, 2011). Interestingly, even when support is not enacted, but only perceived, it is consistently associated with positive health and well-being outcomes, as well as reduced anxiety and depression during stressful times and more positive adjustment to diseases (Gable & Gosnell, 2011). There are multiple mechanisms through which relationships with others and social support can buffer against the negative effects of stressful events. One possibility is that supportive others can alter appraisal of events so they are not perceived as threats or stressors (Gable & Gosnell, 2011). When stressors do occur, having close ties with others helps people cope more effectively with them – either because they receive direct support from others, or because others help them generate new solutions to problems. Furthermore, confiding in and sharing problems with others who understand what we are experiencing has been shown to reduce the negative impact of life stressors (Pennebaker & O'Herron, 1984).

In view of these findings, it can be suggested that strong, supportive, and nurturing relationships are critical for achieving and sustaining positive adaptation in times of stress and adversity. It is also arguable that, within a resilience framework, successful prevention and intervention programs need to consider the relational aspect of resilience by tapping onto natural adaptive systems like family and community (Southwick et al., 2014). A caveat worth mentioning is that social support is protective when it appears in the context of good integration of individuals in their social network (Peterson, 2006). In other words, social support benefits occur in the presence of mutually caring relationships (Berkman, Glass, Brissette, & Seeman, 2000). From this perspective and in relation to resilience, MBA students should benefit from developing specific skills related to building and maintaining

strong relationships. Even more so because some of the greatest leadership challenges post-MBA managers experience are related to managing relationships with peers and bosses. Specifically, they report challenges such as recognizing the importance of relationships, resolving differences with a boss, understanding others' priorities and not just their own, listening to others rather than problem solving, and understanding others with different values and motives (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011).

Hence, the following section includes an overview of two key areas of skills training, focused on enhancing relationships and grounded in empirically-validated approaches from positive psychology: capitalization and active-constructive responding, and strengths spotting. It is important to indicate that workplace relationships, in the MBA context, play a significant role in resilience and will be explored in Module III of the Resilience Training Program.

Capitalization and active-constructive responding. When good things happen, people often reach out to others to share the news of a positive event. This process is called *capitalization* and is linked to a number of positive outcomes (Gable, Gonzaga, & Strachman, 2006; Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004). Personal benefits of capitalization include increased positive emotions, subjective well-being, self-esteem, and decreased loneliness. Relationship benefits associated with sharing positive narratives encompass increased relationship satisfaction, intimacy, commitment, sense of belonging, closeness, and stability (Gable & Reis, 2010).

There are four key types of responding to good news shared by others: active-constructive, passive constructive, active-destructive, and passive-destructive (Gable et al., 2006). Active-constructive responding (ACR) is the only style that is associated with personal well-being and higher relationship quality (Gable et al., 2006). Behavioural display of ACR includes affirming the positive news with enthusiastic comments, asking inquisitive

questions and showing interest in hearing more to enable the narrator to savor the positive experience, and using non-verbal communication such as eye contact, body gestures, and tone of voice to convey interest (see Appendix I).

Interestingly, evidence suggests that how we respond to good news of others is a bigger predictor of relationship satisfaction and stability than how we respond to negative event discussions (Gable et al., 2006). Since sharing good news and responding actively and constructively are associated with many positive outcomes on the personal and relationship level, one can turn ACR into habit by bringing more awareness and attention to these processes. As individuals become mindful of what enables them to do ACR, as well as what prevents them, they can begin to use their character strengths to develop an authentic response style that is active and constructive (Reivich et al., 2011).

Learning the skills of ACR should be highly relevant to MBAs who, throughout their careers, are likely to engage in professional roles that require high capacity for building and sustaining interpersonal relations, including supervising, coaching, and mentoring others. Additionally, as MBAs tend to have demanding jobs and struggle with work-family balance, developing ACR skills may enable them to strengthen relationships not just in the office, but also at home with their spouses and children.

Strengths spotting. In the context of relationships with others, MBA participants in the Resilience Training Program can expand their understanding and use of character strengths by exploring how character strengths can be used for fostering positive relationships (see Appendix I). The language of character strengths serves as a powerful medium which enables us to identify, communicate, and appreciate the best qualities we observe in ourselves and others (Peterson, 2006). Indeed, recognizing and confirming character strengths in people around us, in other words, exercising strengths spotting, requires us to notice when others put their values and good character into action, and thus we learn to become mindful of and to

affirm the good in others (Niemiec, 2014). Cultivating a strengths-spotting practice can help MBAs effectively cope with a self-reported leadership challenge they experience, namely, deriving satisfaction from others' success (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011).

Among the 24 strengths in the VIA Classification, the other-oriented, interpersonal strengths linked to the virtues of humanity (love, kindness, and social intelligence) and justice (teamwork, fairness, and leadership) can offer insights into forming quality relationships. For example, there is an increasing body of research on the benefits of loving-kindness meditation which suggests that the focus on cultivating love and kindness towards oneself and/or others increases feelings of social connection and positivity towards others (Hutcherson, Seppala, & Gross, 2008).

Another interesting possibility to explore strengths in the context of forming relationships is the integration of character strengths in mindful communication with others (Niemiec, Rashid, & Spinella, 2012). Increased mindfulness in interpersonal communication is critical to relationship satisfaction – it allows for more attention to verbal communication and nonverbal cues, and enhances the ability to listen nonjudgmentally. The latter may prove essential for MBAs, who, early in their post-MBA careers, report difficulties with listening to others rather than problem-solving (Benjamin and O'Reilly (2011).

Meaning-Making

A growing body of literature focuses on the role of meaning in the context of resilience and overcoming adversity (Southwick et al., 2014; Gillham et al., 2013; Luthar et al., 2006; Rutter, 1985; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). Taking into consideration the idea that people are intrinsically motivated to make meaning of what happens in their environments (Frankl, 1985), some researchers suggest that *meaning making* is a fundamental human process that becomes especially important in times of crisis and life disruption (Collie & Long, 2005). This view is rooted in the conception that how we respond to any stressor in life

is significantly influenced by our appraisal of the situation and our capacity to process the experience, attach meaning to it, and integrate it into our belief system (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996; Collie & Long, 2005; Park & Ai, 2006; Affleck & Tennen, 1996).

Victor Frankl, the author of *Man's Search for Meaning* and the founder of logotherapy (meaning making), posited that having a strong sense of meaning in one's life is the most powerful driving force to surviving trauma and suffering (Frankl, 1985). Building on this idea, Southwick and colleagues (2014) suggest that what matters to individuals facing adversity is a sense of hope that life indeed makes sense despite chaos, worry, or despair. That sense of hope or "meaning-making" gives order to suffering in life and helps to make a coherent connection between the past, present, and future. Beyond merely surviving suffering, the process of meaning making is associated with post-traumatic growth as individuals appear to develop a more integrated understanding of their experience and incorporate it into a new organization of the self that is better than the pre-existing one (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995; 2004; Park & Fenster, 2004). A growing body of empirical research recognizes that processing threatening events can result in personal growth or psychological benefits (Helgeson, Reynolds, & Tomich, 2006). In this sense, the ability to make meaning of one's experiences in life may help individuals to bounce back from adversity strengthened and more resourceful. In the context of MBAs, making sense of events at work is particularly important due to the uncertain and ambiguous nature of business and the economy. Sudden downsizing, restructuring, cost-cutting, merging of businesses, organizational changes, bankruptcy, and similar turbulences are an inherent part of the post-MBA work landscape. Making sense of such unexpected and undesired changes that are oftentimes outside of one's personal control is critical for MBAs. Furthermore, because work in general, and especially for MBAs, shapes a large part of one's sense of identity, the ability to make meaning out of their professional setbacks and disappointments can have a profound

impact on MBAs' overall well-being. At least equally important for MBAs is making sense of personal trauma and loss, particularly because most work places today are not yet designed to accommodate these difficult experiences, for example through counselling, bereavement leave, and support groups (Sandberg & Grant, 2017).

There are various theoretical perspectives on meaning making, and although differing in some particulars, they seem to converge on a set of essential tenets: (a) they posit that people possess cognitive frameworks that enable them to interpret events in their lives, referred to as *global meaning*; (b) when facing stressful situations, individuals appraise the situations and assign meaning to them, referred to as *situational meaning*; (c) individuals' level of experienced distress depends on the discrepancy between situational and global meaning; (d) such discrepancy triggers a process of meaning making; (e) through meaning making efforts individuals attempt to reduce the discrepancy and restore a sense of the world as meaningful; and (f) when successful, this process leads to better psychological adjustment to stressful events (Park, 2010; Collie & Long, 2005; Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006). Meaning making, then, attempts to bridge the gap between the experienced adversity and one's global beliefs about meaning of life in general. It reflects the efforts made by individuals to restore a sense of coherence and order of life, and place adversity within a total life schema (Park & Folkman, 1997).

Furthermore, theoretical models of meaning making identify two distinct construals of meaning that play role in adjustment: *making sense of loss and adversity* within existing fundamental worldviews, and *finding benefit* in the experience of these events (Affleck & Tennen, 1996; Davis, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Larson, 1998). *Meaning as a sense-making* refers to the process of placing events within one's fundamental conceptions of how the world is assumed to work (Davis et al., 1998). In Western cultures, people tend to believe that events in their lives are generally predictable and controllable, that bad things don't happen to good

people, and that people get what they deserve (Davis et al., 1998). When unexpected adverse events happen, we might ask, “Why me?” or “How could God let this happen?” Traumatic or stressful experiences can shatter our core beliefs about the world and ourselves, and thus may threaten both our sense of meaning in life and our assumptions about the comprehensibility and meaningfulness of events (Davis et al., 1998). For example, losing one’s job or contracting a serious disease may not only make important life goals unobtainable, but it may also shake core assumptions about justice and fairness in the world. As a result, coping with a terrible event may require rethinking of assumptions and beliefs and making sense of what can seem incomprehensible.

Benefit-finding, on the other hand, refers to the pursuit of the “silver lining” in adversity, in other words, considering positive implications of adverse events for one’s life (Davis et al., 1998). Adversity can lose some of its harshness through cognitive adaptations such as positive reappraisal and finding the good within the bad (Affleck & Tennen, 1996). Learning about one’s strength or gaining wisdom about the meaning of life through difficult experiences may help to alleviate the feelings of loss or helplessness and preserve the notion that one’s life still has worth and value (Frankl, 1955/1986). It is not uncommon that individuals can derive gains from traumatic events – from heart attack survivors to breast cancer patients and military veterans, research suggests that common benefits found in adversity include stronger relationships with close friends and family, greater sense of purpose, enhanced personal strengths such as patience, tolerance, empathy and courage, and valued changes in life priorities (Affleck, Tennen, Croog, & Levine, 1987; Antoni et al., 2001). Looking for potentially positive outcomes in trauma seems to allow for a resolution of the experience, enabling the person to move onward with life (Carver & Scheier, 1998). While it may be extremely hard to construe benefits in negative events, evidence demonstrates that this approach to coping is associated with reduced stress, increased

emotional processing, better adjustment to adversity, and improved psychological well-being (Antoni et al., 2001; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996; Stanko et al., 2015).

Consistent with findings on meaning making as a process of finding benefit in and making sense of events in our lives, research suggests that meaning making is an ongoing process of storying, a way of organizing happenings into coherent life stories or narratives that preserve the integrity of the self and the notion that life is meaningful despite suffering and loss (Arciero & Guidano, 2000; Collie & Long, 2005). More than two decades ago, Smyth and Pennebaker (1999) posited that narrative self-disclosure through expressive writing produces significant mental and physical benefits, and acts as a coping strategy in times of stress and difficulty. Similarly, Bluck and Habermas (2000) introduced the concept of “life story schema”, a cognitive model that enables individuals to turn episodes from their autobiographical memory into a coherent life-narrative. Such life-narratives provide causal, temporal, and thematic coherence of life events and generate an overall sense of identity. Often these narratives include what McAdams and McLean (2013) refer to as “redemptive sequences” where negative experiences bring about some positive outcomes. Since language, by definition, is structured, the very act of writing a narrative may prompt causal reflection (e.g. A may have led to B, which may have led to C), thus reinforcing deeper understanding, meaning, and ultimately, a sense of control (Lyubomirsky, 2007). Because language naturally structures the depiction of events, they appear more manageable and controllable. As Pennebaker and colleagues (1997) observed, the more people used causal words such as *because*, and insight words such as *understand*, *realize*, *see*, in their writing about a stressful event, the greater the improvement they experienced in their health. The act of “telling the story” or constructing a narrative about a distressing experience can lead individuals to come to new insights about the meaning of the event, reappraise its causes and implications, and possibly discover “silver linings”. Furthermore, it can help individuals accept the situation

and release some of the emotional burden, thus allowing them to move past the experience (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

Creative storytelling, then, might enable the construction of personal identity and organize existential experiences into coherent life stories. These findings have important implications for MBA students who can employ narrative writing, for example, through journaling, as a tool for reflection and integration of difficult experiences within a larger life pattern (see Appendix J). The benefits of storytelling are not limited to making sense of adversity only – students can use writing activities to construct meaningful stories that help them explore deeper aspects of themselves, set goals that are important to them, or consolidate their insights about the meaning of life. For instance, they can write a letter to themselves, where they talk to their future best self, or visualize the end of their studies and reflect on what growth, transformation, and changes have occurred.

In summary of this section, Module II interventions are listed at the end of this paper and encompass practices related to savoring, gratitude and kindness, activities for exploring character strengths, ACR tools, ideas for strengths spotting, and a narrative writing exercise. After exploring possibilities for protecting and promoting well-being in the face of challenges, the paper continues with a section on Module III which highlights the crucial role of relational contexts and support systems for sustaining well-being.

Module III: Building Support Systems (Sustaining)

As emphasized earlier in this paper, resilience arises from dynamic interactions *within* and *between* the individual and the environment, hence individual resilience must be placed within the larger context of support systems such as family, community, and organizations (Masten, 2001). These support systems are key for sustaining individual resilience and well-being in the face of stress and challenges. While building and preserving such support systems is largely dependent on public policy, for example, providing supportive business

school environment, safe neighbourhoods, and occupational health and safety services, there are some possibilities for individuals to strengthen the support systems in their lives. These possibilities are the focus of Module III of the Resilience Training Program. This module builds on the previous two modules and is contingent on them – it touches on key protective factors and processes covered in previous chapters, but this time, it revisits them from the angle of what MBAs can do to strengthen the support systems in their lives. Since the target audience of the program are MBA students who, as future managers and leaders are likely to spend a significant amount of their time at work, the module focuses on building support systems in the workplace, and incorporates insights from positive psychology and positive organizational scholarship (POS). Specifically, Module III provides relevant research and ideas for actions that MBAs can initiate to build strong support systems in their organizations and to sustain individual resilience in difficult times through high-quality connections, meaning, and positive emotions.

High-quality connections (HQCs)

As indicated in Module II, relationships with others are foundational for building and maintaining resilience. Here, relationships are explored in the workplace context to derive insight on how MBAs can build support systems in their organizations. In POS, the importance of relationships for employee well-being is reflected in a significant body of research on high-quality connections (HQCs). *High-quality connections* are defined as short-term, dyadic interactions that generate a positive subjective experience for the connected individuals (Stephens, Heaphy, & Dutton, 2011). HQCs literally and figuratively enliven people – they produce a feeling of vitality and a heightened sense of positive energy (Quinn & Dutton, 2005); generate a sense of positive regard, in other words, a sense of feeling known, loved, and cared for (Rogers, 1951); and finally, they are characterized by the degree of felt mutuality (Stephens et al., 2011). In other words, HQCs are the micro-moments of

relationships (J. Dutton, personal communication, March 25, 2017). Studies suggest that HQCs are important means by which individuals grow and evolve (Ragins & Verbons, 2007), enhance and broaden identities (Roberts, 2007), and form attachments to work organizations and communities (Blatt & Camden, 2007). HQCs are associated with a number of positive psychological and physiological changes, including enhanced individual and organizational resilience, greater level of psychological safety and trust, and increased work commitment, as well as better functioning of the cardiovascular and immune systems (Stephens, Heaphy, & Dutton, 2011).

For the purposes of this paper, it is important to outline how high-quality connections are built and strengthened. Stephens and colleagues (2011) suggest that there are three sets of mechanisms – cognitive, emotional, and behavioural – that underlie the formation of HQCs.

Cognitive mechanisms. Cognitions are key building blocks for connections because they shape individuals' orientation toward forming connections with others (Stephens et al., 2011). A primary mechanism for establishing connection is *other-awareness*, that is, being aware of the presence and behaviors of others and recognizing them as an important aspect of the environment (Davis & Holtgraves, 1984). Another mechanism that shapes HQCs are the *impressions* we form about others. Within as quick as five minutes, people can make rapid judgments of whether others are supportive, warm, and accepting, and these impressions shape the choice of who to connect with. Postures, facial expressions, and other non-verbal communication cues play an important role in forming impressions about others (Stephens et al., 2011). *Perspective-taking* is another cognitive mechanism that fosters HQCs – it has been conceptualized as the cognitive component of empathy that enables individuals to imagine themselves in another person's shoes (Stephens et al., 2011). Perspective-taking facilitates the shaping of one's own behavior in ways that demonstrate care and concern for others, and this helps build a connection with them.

Emotional mechanisms. Three key areas of emotional mechanisms provide theoretical accounts for how emotions build and strengthen connections between people: positive emotions, emotional contagion, and empathy (Stephens et al., 2011). Fredrickson's (1998, 2001) research suggests that *positive emotions* broaden individuals' views of themselves and dissolves the boundaries between "me" and "you", leading to self-expansion, more interconnection, and closeness with others. Evidence indicates that the positive emotion of gratitude, in particular, creates greater connection between people both short-term and long-term (Fredrickson, 2004). *Emotional contagion* is another important mechanism and relates to the phenomenon of interpersonal influence of emotions where a person can influence the emotions and attitudes of another person (Stephens et al., 2011). Finally, *empathy* is viewed as the basis of human connection (Miller & Stiver, 1997). When people feel empathy for another, they experience compassion, warmth, and care for the other and this generates altruistic and prosocial behavior, two important markers of higher quality relationships (Reis & Collins, 2000).

Behavioral mechanisms. Behaviors are observable elements of interpersonal communication and are foundational for the building of HQCs. Research indicates three specific pathways for building connection through behavior: *respectful engagement*, *task enabling*, and *building trust* (Dutton, 2003; Stephens et al., 2011). These pathways are especially important for MBAs as they are action-oriented and offer specific suggestions for building HQCs with others (see Appendix K).

To start with, *respectful engagement* is reflected in interactions that convey a sense of the person's worth and value, and demonstrate esteem, dignity, and care for the other person (Ramarajan, Barsade, & Burack, 2008). In communication between individuals, being psychologically present for and engaged with the other displays respect and promotes continued interaction. Additionally, actions that communicate affirmation, respect, and worth

can enable connections and make them more meaningful (Stephens et al., 2011). Research suggests five specific strategies for respectful engagement - being present for others, behaving genuinely, communicating affirmation and recognition, listening attentively, and fostering supportive communication (Dutton, 2003). One can be *present for others* by minimizing distraction (for example, by putting aside the mobile phone and laptop when conversing with the other person), using mindful body language (e.g. looking in the other person's eye in a conversation and using inviting hand gestures), and being available (leaving empty space in one's agenda and the office door open to convey physical availability). *Being genuine* requires speaking and acting from a real and honest place – the more one can be aligned with internal desires and motivations, the more they can be authentic in connecting to others. *Communicating affirmation* implies looking for the positive core, value, and worth in another person. One way to communicate affirmation is to express recognition and understanding of the other person's situation. Another way is by expressing recognition – such acts not only communicate appreciation for a job well done, but also affirm the value of the other person. One can also communicate affirmation by expressing genuine interest (for example, asking questions that convey sincere curiosity about another) and treating time as precious (e.g. showing up on time, respectfully asking for time, and granting time for the other person). *Effective listening* involves both empathetic (being other-centered intellectually and emotionally) and active (being responsive as a listener and encouraging further communication) listening. Finally, *supportive communication* can be demonstrated through making requests as opposed to demands (i.e. communicating clear and specific objectives through positive action language), making communication specific rather than general (for example, when giving feedback to others), and focusing on descriptive as opposed to evaluative statements (avoiding judgment by remaining descriptive and focused on solutions).

Task enabling is the second important behavioural pathway for building HQCs with each other at work. Task enabling may be particularly important for MBAs as it resembles a style of leadership, although it can happen between people at all levels of the organization (Dutton, 2003). Defined as helping someone to perform a task, task enabling suggests that the interpersonal sharing of information, emotional support, and other resources can promote perspective-taking and gratitude, which fortify relationships (Dutton, 2003). There are three main ways in which task enabling can strengthen relationships: first, when one person enables another, an ongoing investment of resources like time, motivation, and ideas, is activated and flows from one person to the other; second, task enabling conveys positive regard for the other person, for example, through small acts of helping that make another person's job easier; and finally, task enabling enhances connection by transforming the task enable's self-perception – those who enable others derive a heightened sense of personal worth, which leads to further investment in the relationship (Dutton, 2003). Specific strategies for task enabling include *teaching* (sharing useful information that enables others to perform better), *designing* (structuring features of one's job to make it more interesting to them), *advocating* (helping others navigate the political landscape of the organization), *accommodating* (being flexible in ways that enable others to succeed), and *nurturing* (addressing developmental needs of others to improve their performance). In the MBA context, task enabling has a great potential for building support systems at work because it can enable young managers to establish mutually-beneficial and meaningful connections to their subordinates.

Building trust is the third pathway for building HQCs. Trusting involves acting towards others in ways that convey a belief in their integrity, dependability, and benevolence (Holmes & Rempel, 1989). There are four dimensions of trusting – we build trust by what we say and don't say, and by what we do and don't do (Dutton, 2003). Trusting by *what we say*

involves sharing information that is helpful to others, disclosing valuable information about ourselves, and using inclusive language. In contrast, trusting by *what we don't say* implies refraining from accusing others of bad intent or demeaning them. Trusting by *what we do* entails actions that inspire trust in others, such as giving away control, granting access to valuable resources, and soliciting and acting on input. Conversely, trusting by *what we don't do* suggests refraining from corrosive actions that can undermine trust, for example, avoiding surveillance and punishing people for errors.

Learning the skills and strategies to build high-quality connections with others – through respectful engagement, task enabling, and trusting – can enable MBA students to improve relationships with others in their organizational settings and build a support network they can rely on in times of stress and difficulty (see Appendix K).

Finding Meaning in Work

Module II, Building Strengths and Assets, illuminated the importance of meaning and meaning-making for resilience in the face of trauma and adversity. Here, meaning is revisited from a different perspective, precisely, how one can find meaning in work. Drawing from research in positive psychology and POB, I posit that MBAs can build a stronger relationship to their work through meaning, and, by consequence, be better prepared to persevere through work challenges and stressors when they occur. Furthermore, as work will likely play a central role in the lives of many MBAs, it is conceivable that having a sense of meaning at work can serve as a protective factor for resilience when MBAs face adversity in their personal lives.

Research on the meaning of work suggests that people tend to frame their relationship to work in different ways. Specifically, psychologists have argued that there are three general orientations that determine people's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors towards work (Baumeister, 1991; Schwartz, 1994; Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997).

These general orientations illuminate how people see their work and how they craft their jobs in order to fulfil their orientations towards the work (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). These dominant work orientations differentiate work as a *job*, as a *career*, and as a *calling* (Schwartz, 1994). People who view their work as a *job* tend to focus on the material benefits of work and experience minimal engagement or meaning. For them, work is a necessity of life and a means to secure their living financially. Usually, their interests and aspirations are expressed outside of work (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). In contrast, people who see their work as a *career* are motivated by the prospects of progressing within the organizational structure. They focus on advancement, increased pay, prestige, and status that come with promotion. Finally, people who see their work as a *calling* work not for financial rewards or advancement, but for the fulfilment and satisfaction derived from work. For them, work is one of the most important parts of life, a vital part of their identity, and a source of intrinsic motivation. They view work as an end in itself and usually believe that their work makes the world a better place (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). A study of work orientations shows that people significantly differ in how they make meaning of their work, even when they have the same jobs within the same organization (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Overall, it is suggested that individuals with a calling orientation have a better and more rewarding relationship to work, linked to spending more time at work and deriving more satisfaction from it (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Furthermore, longitudinal research reveals that those with a calling orientation proactively seek and shape jobs that fulfil their need for meaning in the work domain (Wrzesniewski, 1999). Interestingly, a calling orientation appears to benefit workgroups too as it is positively associated with a stronger identification with the team, more faith and trust in management, more commitment to the team, and healthier group processes (Wrzesniewski, 2003). Building on these findings, Wrzesniewski (2003) suggests

that the way people see their work can predict their own individual thriving and have positive implications for their workgroups and organizations.

What are the practical implications of this research for MBA students? As evidence shows, people view their work as a job, a career, or a calling in all kinds of jobs. Thus, it is not the formal job requirements or the design of the work itself that seems to determine how people relate to work (Wrzesniewski, 2003). Drawing on these insights, Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) introduce the idea of “job crafting” and propose that individuals with different work orientations may structure their work differently. *Job crafting* is defined as “the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work” (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001, p. 179). In other words, job crafting refers to the creative process people undertake to shape, redesign, and mold their jobs in ways that can foster job satisfaction, engagement, resilience, and thriving at work (Berg, Dutton, & Wrzesniewski, 2013). In this context, MBA students can use job crafting to customize their jobs to better fit their strengths, interests, and passions, and thereby build a more meaningful connection to work that can serve as a protective factor in times of stress (see Appendix L). Through job crafting, they can realize a calling orientation by reshaping any job in ways that allow them to view work as making a meaningful contribution to the wider world (Wrzesniewski, 2003).

Research suggests that people can engage in three different forms of job crafting: *task crafting*, *relational crafting*, and *cognitive crafting* (Berg et al., 2007). *Task crafting* refers to altering the activities involved in a job by taking on more or fewer tasks, broadening or diminishing the scope of tasks, or altering the way tasks are performed (for example, an executive creating a new method for reporting on key business indicators). *Relational crafting* involves changing the extent or nature of interactions with other people (for example, a manager offering one-on-one coaching sessions with subordinates as a way to have more

connection time with them and to practice coaching skills). Finally, *cognitive crafting* entails changing the way one thinks about the purpose of tasks, relationships, or the job as a whole (for example, a sales executive seeing her job as making the lives of other people better through the products she sells rather than simply sending digital marketing campaigns). Job crafting is not an isolated, one-time event; in contrast, it occurs as a continuous process. Additionally, the three crafting forms are not mutually exclusive and often coexist and reinforce one another. Fundamentally, job crafting is about resourcefulness – it implies that the tasks and relationships involved in a job are flexible and can be reorganized and reframed to construct a job that provides more meaning and alignment with personal strengths, skills, values, and interests (Berg et al., 2007).

Although job crafting can happen, formally or informally, at any level of the organization, managers typically have more discretion and autonomy, thus MBAs, as prospective future managers, are in a unique position when it comes to job crafting (Berg et al., 2007). As managers, MBAs will likely have considerable room to craft their own jobs, and at the same time, because of their position, even small changes to their jobs can have a significant impact on other employees and the organization as a whole. From that perspective, MBAs can employ job crafting to find greater meaning in their work, make positive impact on individual and organizational performance, and build stronger connections to work and others. To facilitate the process of job crafting, Berg, Dutton and Wrzesniewski (2013) have designed a Job Crating Exercise which includes a step-by-step manual for crafting work in alignment with individual values, strengths, and passions (see Appendix L). The exercise can be done by MBA students in the Resilience Training Program as a helpful preparation for their transition back to work, as well as embraced as a continuous practice of finding more meaning and fulfilment in their professional lives. Taken together, these elements build a strong support system at work that can help MBAs weather personal and

professional storms. These projections about positive outcomes related to job crafting find empirical support as studies show that job crafting may lead to greater experience of achievement, enjoyment, and meaning, as well as enhanced resilience, mediated by increased sense of competence, personal growth, and ability to cope with future adversity (Berg et al., 2007).

Positive emotions at work

As seen in Module II, positive emotions do more than simply making one feel good in the moment. Fredrickson's (1998, 2001) *broaden-and-build* theory posits that positive emotions (1) broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires, (2) undo negative emotional arousal, (3) improve coping strategies by stimulating creative and flexible thinking, (4) buffer against depression, and (5) build enduring psychological resources, thus making people more resilient (Fredrickson, 2003). Furthermore, positive emotions fortify relationships – they stimulate self-expansion and dissolve boundaries between “me” and “you”, thus creating new possibilities for interconnection where “us” emerges (Fredrickson, 2001). In this sense, positive emotions are pivotal for building support systems. Since work provides recurring contexts in which individuals can experience positive emotions, this section focuses on how MBA students can leverage positive emotions in their organizations to enhance personal resilience and well-being.

Let us start by looking at the role of positive emotions in organizational settings. A study of Staw and colleagues (1994) assessed positive emotions and related job outcomes in an 18-month longitudinal study of 272 employees. They found that positive emotions predicted improvements in supervisor evaluations, as well as improvements in pay. Similarly, they found that positive emotions predicted increases in social support from both supervisors and peers. In other words, those individuals who experienced and expressed more positive emotions at stage one of the study, demonstrated transformation into more effective and

socially integrated employees 18 months later. Particularly relevant to this paper is another study of Staw and Barsade (1993), testing MBA students in managerial simulations. The results indicated that MBAs who reported more positive emotions were more accurate and careful when they performed decision-making tasks, and more interpersonally effective in leaderless group discussions. Together with the broaden-and-build theory, the work of Staw and colleagues (1993; 1994) demonstrates that positive emotions can enable individuals to be more creative, effective, and socially integrated at work. From an organizational perspective, there are similar positive outcomes related to positive emotions – positive emotions displayed by leaders can predict better performance of their teams; emotions like compassion activate prosocial behavior; and the experience of gratitude reinforces moral behavior and triggers a cascade of beneficial social outcomes (Fredrickson, 2003). In other words, positive emotions like joy, interest, gratitude, pride, contentment, and love can transform not only individuals, but also organizations through making their members more flexible, adaptive, creative, empathic, and interconnected.

What can MBAs do to cultivate positive emotions in themselves and colleagues at work? There is a multitude of ways to incorporate positive emotions at work. However, since the main objective of Module III is to offer insight on building support systems in the workplace, this section includes suggestions that are not exhaustive, but rather illustrative of how positive emotions can be leveraged in a relational context, in other words, in interacting with others (see Appendix M). To start with, MBAs can use infuse work meetings with positive emotions through simple practices such as *appreciative check-in*, “*what went well*” type of questions, and *playful ice-breakers*. Meetings have a strategic importance for the optimal functioning of the organization as they can spark or kill interpersonal connections between its members (Dutton, 2003). A ritual such as the appreciative check-in involves opening meetings by publicly expressing appreciation of other team members. Taking the

time to affirm and acknowledge helpful, cooperative, and generous behavior of others can not only produce positive emotions in both the giver and the recipient, but can create high-quality connections between individuals (Dutton, 2003). Another simple idea to start meetings on a positive note is to ask what went well since the last meeting – such practice is used successfully in schools centred on positive education (Seligman, 2011), and has been shown to draw attention to positive experiences, strengths, and possibilities, which, in turn, broadens people's minds and expands their mindscape. Humour and play, on the other hand, are often used as a way to elicit positive emotions – ice-breakers can make meetings lively, fun, and energizing, and foster interpersonal relations.

Another practice for generating positive emotions with additional benefits for relationships at work is to offer specific pathways for *expressing gratitude*, for example, through a “Gratitude Jar” (see Appendix M). The Gratitude Jar can be placed conveniently in common areas for social interaction, such as the coffee machine, and serve as an invitation for employees to write brief notes of appreciation to other colleagues. These notes can be read at a special monthly meeting or in any other format that fits the organizational culture. What is important is to use the positive emotion of gratitude to create micro-moments of connection, recognition, and encouragement. Similarly, MBAs might consider proactively giving *positive feedback* and *celebrating the success of others* to stimulate the experience of emotions like pride and contentment, which, in turn, can revitalize relationships. Regardless whether formalized or not, attempts to elicit positive emotions at work can help MBAs establish connection to others in constructive and meaningful ways, thus enabling them to build support systems and personal resources for coping in difficult times.

Module III interventions include specific activities for facilitating high-quality connections, a job-crafting exercise, and a set of recommendations for cultivating positive emotions at work.

In summary, Chapter III provides a conceptual design for the MBA Resilience Training Program, built on the principles of protecting, promoting, and sustaining well-being. The appendices developed for section will hopefully provide a greater and more pragmatic understanding of the theoretical concepts covered in Chapter III and enable the reader to implement some of the suggested interventions in real life.

CHAPTER IV: LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This paper has several limitations. First, while I have considered the specific challenges faced by MBA students, I have not found research on resilience training and interventions applied to this *specific population*. It is possible that MBA students adapt to adversity through distinct mechanisms that are in some ways different from the mechanisms studied in other populations and included in this paper. As I have focused on processes and protective factors that appear to be common across various populations, from children and youth to military personnel, medical staff, and executives, my underlying assumption is that topics and interventions covered in this paper will be relevant, while not exhaustive, for MBA students.

Second, most studies included in this paper use *self-reported measures* and thus suffer from methodological shortcomings such as social desirability, situational influences, and lack of recall (A. Duckworth, personal communication, September 30, 2016). Self-reported data in research on resilience also means that resilience is measured as a self-perception, and not tested in the actual context of a specific adversity, in other words, it can only be assumed that sustained high-reported levels of resilience translate in resilient actions when the situation arises.

Third, it is unclear whether the *duration* of the Resilience Training Program for MBAs (9 days) is sufficient to generate a cognitive-behavioral change and sustain that change over time. A systemic review of 14 work-based resilience training interventions

indicates that the length of the interventions ranged from a single 90-minute session to 13 weekly sessions of two hours, and concludes that there is no available evidence that longer programs produce better results (Robertson, Cooper, Sarkar, & Curran, 2015).

The intention of this paper is to provide the conceptual backbone for the development of a relevant, research-based, and applicable Resilience Training Program for MBA students. As such, this paper is just the first step of setting up a Resilience Training Program, and requires further work on designing and planning detailed session outlines, classroom activities and interventions, and teaching and training methodology. The descriptions of various interventions included in the appendices at the end of the paper (Appendix A-M) should provide helpful support in these next steps.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to provide a conceptual design of an evidence-based Resilience Training Program for MBA students, tailored to their unique challenges as future business leaders. The paper built a case that such program can help MBAs become more resilient – accept the reality, focus on what they can control, positively reframe difficulties, improvise and adapt, build strong social bonds, and find meaning in difficult times. In other words, it can help them bounce back and forward through challenges and despite them. Naturally, the proposition that resilience matters to MBAs challenges the prevailing corporate culture to put mental health and thriving on a par with business productivity and performance. While many of the suggestions included in this paper may boost performance as a by-product of greater resilience, it is important to emphasize that the well-being of MBAs is worth pursuing in its own right, as an autotelic goal.

In fact, at the heart of this paper lies the hope that resilience may not only enable MBAs to preserve and sustain their well-being in less favourable circumstances, but also it may empower them to be better business leaders for the world. Many of the world's greatest

challenges can be solved by business, and business is run by people. If these people – the leaders and managers of small and large institutions, as MBAs intend do and will likely become – are well, they will be able to create value and do good for their organizations and, ultimately, for the world we live in.

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Appendix A

Program Overview

Resilience Training Program for MBA Students

MODULE I PROTECTING Mental Health & Well-Being	MODULE II PROMOTING Mental Health & Well-Being	MODULE III SUSTAINING Mental Health & Well-Being
Emotion Regulation & Cognitive Flexibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABC Model • Thinking Traps • Iceberg Beliefs • ABCDE Optimism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanatory Style (Personalization, Pervasiveness, Permanence) Hope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency thinking & pathways through goal-setting 	Positive Emotions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Savoring • Gratitude • Kindness Character Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aware-Explore-Apply • GROW Positive Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalization & ACR • Strengths Spotting Meaning-making <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storytelling & Expressive writing 	High-Quality Connections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respectful Engagement • Task Enabling • Trusting Meaning in Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job crafting Positive Emotions at Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In meetings: Appreciative check-in, WWW, ice-breakers • Gratitude Jar • Celebrating Success of Others

Appendix B

MBA Transitions and Challenges

The Resilience Training Program for MBA students aims to address real-life challenges faced by MBAs, both personally and professionally. The theoretical and empirical work of Benjamin and O'Reilly (2011) on early career transitions and leadership challenges for MBAs has been particularly useful in selecting the most relevant protective factors and skills of resilience in line with the needs of the MBA population. As it can be seen from the table below, there are three major types of early career transitions that await MBAs – role transitions, business transitions, and personal transitions. These transitions are marked by four common leadership challenges: managing and motivating subordinates, managing relationships with peers and bosses, developing a leadership mindset, and coping with setbacks and disappointments.

While the Resilience Training Program addresses more directly MBAs' personal transitions and challenges related to building relationships with others, regulating emotions, and coping with setbacks, it is important to reiterate that, implicitly, resilience can enhance the coping ability of MBAs in any type of transition and challenge because it entails transferrable skills and processes such as cognitive flexibility, accurate thinking, emotion regulation, goal attainment, and connecting with self and others, applicable in any situation.

Early Career Transitions

	Role Transitions	Business Transitions	Personal Transitions
Type of instigating change	Change in Role	Change in business/stage in organizational life cycle	Situation creating values conflict
Incidents identified by informants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From individual contributor to first-time manager • Taking responsibility for team performance • Managing other managers • Managing transitions in function or scope 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launching a new initiative or business • Managing growth • Turning around a group or business • Taking a team/business to the next level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing strategic differences with a boss • Navigating and correcting ethically questionable practices • Blending work, life, and family • Dealing with professional setbacks
Learning	Role Requirements <i>"What does it mean to be a leader in this new role?"</i>	New Strategies and Tactics <i>"How can I get things done in a different business context?"</i>	Judgment and Integrity <i>"How do I stay true to myself?"</i>

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Four Common Leadership Challenges

Managing Others

1. Managing and motivating subordinates
 - Understanding others with different values and motives
 - Appreciating the importance of B and C players—not just A players
 - Listening to others rather than problem solving
 - Establishing credibility—especially when others have more experience
 - Being clear about what your value added is as a manager
 - Dealing with poor performers and problem employees
 - Setting clear expectations
2. Managing relationships with peers and bosses
 - Recognizing the importance of relationships—process and content
 - An inability to resolve differences with a boss
 - The importance of understanding others' priorities—not just your own
 - Balancing competition and cooperation among peers
 - Being right versus being effective—appreciating that peer conflicts taint all involved, regardless of who is “right”

Managing the Self

3. Developing a leadership mind-set
 - Understanding that individual skill and effort are no longer what makes you successful
 - Looking to solve problems—not simply identifying them
 - Developing others
 - Being intentional
 - Deriving satisfaction from others' success
 4. Coping with setbacks and disappointments
 - Maintaining poise and composure under pressure
 - Understanding how you react to a setback may be more important than the setback itself
 - Being overwhelmed
 - Balancing work and family pressures
-

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Appendix C

The Penn Resilience Program

The Penn Resiliency Program (PRP; Gillham, Reivich, & Jaycox, 2008; Gillham, Brunwasser, & Freres, 2008; Gillham et al., 2007) is a group, school-based prevention program for late elementary and middle school students, designed to enhance resilience, prevent depression, and improve overall well-being. The curriculum teaches cognitive-behavioral and social problem-solving skills and is based in part on cognitive-behavioral principles and clinical practices. The protective factors targeted in PRP are emotion awareness and regulation, impulse control, cognitive flexibility, realistic optimism, self-efficacy, and strong relationships (Gillham & Reivich, 2010).

A description of the PRP lessons is available on the website of the Positive Psychology Center (PPC, 2017) of the University of Pennsylvania here:

<https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/research/resilience-children>

The description of PRP lessons is included below for reference – it is provided in its original form and content, as available on the PPC (2017) website.

Description of PRP Lessons

Lesson #1: Link Between Thoughts and Feelings

The first half of PRP Lesson 1 is devoted to introducing the students to the program, establishing rapport, and building group cohesion. The cognitive component of this lesson is based on the ABC model (Ellis, 1962). Automatic thoughts are introduced as "conversations inside our heads", or "self talk", and students are encouraged to describe recent activating events, or adversities, and to recall what they "said to themselves". The final section of Lesson 1 focuses on the link between thoughts and feelings; the B-C of the ABC model. Students, with the aid of 3-frame cartoons, generate the automatic thoughts that make sense of specific emotional consequences, given the adversity.

Lesson #2: Thinking Styles

The focus of this lesson is on explanatory style, particularly the stable-unstable dimension. Optimism and pessimism, referred to as "thinking styles" in PRP, are presented to the students through a series of skits that they act out as a group. The students practice identifying permanent (stable) thoughts in similar skits. Activities in the lesson require the students to generate alternatives to the initial, explanatory style-driven thoughts of the actors. For homework, students use their knowledge of explanatory style to generate alternative explanations for events in their own lives.

Lesson #3: Challenging Beliefs: Alternatives and Evidence

After Lessons 1 and 2 the students are able to identify their pessimistic automatic thoughts and have come to understand that we often uncritically accept these thoughts as accurate. They have also practiced generating more optimistic alternatives. In PRP Lesson 3, the students consolidate the skill of generating alternatives and learn how to evaluate the accuracy of these beliefs and their initial, automatic thoughts.

The group leader reads a story to the students which presents the process of generating alternatives and evaluating evidence as analogous to the work of a detective. The story is about two fictional characters, Sherlock Holmes and Merlock Worms. Merlock Worms is a bad detective because he only comes up with one suspect (i.e., endorses his initial automatic thoughts and fails to generate alternatives) and overlooks evidence which is vital to the case (i.e., fails to evaluate the thought). Sherlock, however, is a good detective because he draws up a list of suspects (generates candidate beliefs) and looks for clues to narrow down the list (evaluates evidence).

Lesson #5: Review of Lessons 1-4

PRP Lesson 5 is devoted to reviewing the cognitive skills developed in Lessons 1 through 4 and applying these skills to inaccurate beliefs about the causes of adversities and catastrophic thoughts about the future.

Lesson #6: Assertiveness and Negotiation

Lesson 6 of PRP is the first in the interpersonal problem-solving module. This module aims to apply the basic cognitive skills learned in the first half of the program to the interpersonal domain, highlighting interaction style, social skills, and social problem-solving. Skits are used to illustrate the three interaction styles; aggression, passivity, and assertiveness. Students discuss the consequences of each type of behavior as well as beliefs that promote or inhibit it. The students spend most of the lesson practicing assertiveness and role-playing the use of negotiation skills when assertiveness fails to bring about the desired goal.

Lesson #7: Coping Strategies

Lesson 7 teaches the students more behaviorally oriented techniques to help them cope with difficult emotions or stressful situations, like when their parents are arguing. The group leader covers a variety of skills and strategies, including controlled breathing and muscle relaxation and guides them through practicing each. In addition, the group leader helps the students formulate a positive visual image (e.g., their next birthday party), which they can call to mind when they begin to feel angry or anxious. Students are also encouraged to seek support from others, including family members and friends.

Lesson #8: Graded Task and Social Skills Training

The first half of this lesson is devoted to procrastination. Many cases of procrastination are a consequence of all-or-none-thinking. The perfectionistic child who believes "My social studies paper has to be an A+" will tend to build the task of writing the paper into a seemingly insurmountable problem. The behavioral consequence of such thoughts is avoidance, or procrastination. This component of PRP aims to apply the cognitive skills learned in the first 4 weeks of the program to negative thoughts about projects and chores. In addition, students learn a strategy for overcoming procrastination by breaking large projects into smaller, more manageable steps.

Lesson #9: Decision Making and Review of Lessons 6-8

The first part of Lesson 9 reviews the skills covered in Lessons 6 through 8 through a discussion of hypothetical dilemmas and ways to handle these scenarios. Students also practice relaxation techniques and assertiveness strategies.

Indecisiveness is common for children who are experiencing symptoms of depression. Many of the same thoughts that lead to procrastination can make decision making difficult for children and adolescents at-risk for depression. In Lesson 9 the group leader leads them through the use of a four-cell technique for decision-making, in which they generate the pros and cons for different actions. In the final section of the lesson, this technique is applied to examples from the students' lives.

Lesson #10: Social Problem-solving

Many children, especially children at risk for depression and conduct disorder, selectively attend to hostile cues and attribute the ambiguous behavior of others to hostile intent (Dodge, 1986; Dodge & Frame, 1982). Lesson 10 combats this tendency by teaching a 5-step approach to problem-solving. First, students are taught to stop and think about problems before reacting impulsively. In this step, students learn to gather evidence for and against their initial beliefs, to consider alternative interpretations, and to perspective-take. Second, students are encouraged to determine what their goal is in the situation. Third, students learn to generate a variety of possible solutions. Fourth, students use the decision-making techniques from Lesson 9 to choose a course of action and enact it. Finally, students learn to evaluate the outcome and to try again if they haven't reached their goal. The final portion of this lesson is spent practicing their social problem-solving skills with several scenarios offered by the group leader.

Lessons #11 and #12

The skills of social problem-solving are consolidated in PRP Lesson 11, which provides a forum for the students to apply the five-step technique to difficult interpersonal situations in their own lives. The final lesson of PRP, Lesson 12, is a review of the entire program and a party for the students. The importance of attending the booster sessions is discussed.

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Appendix D

Emotion Regulation and Cognitive Flexibility

ABC Model

What is ABC? Our emotions and behaviors are triggered not by events themselves, but by how we interpret those events. Indeed, *we are what we think*. The ABC model stands for Activating event (A), Beliefs (B), and Consequences (C), and offers a structured way to detect your thoughts when faced with stress and struggle, and understand how they impact you emotionally. In simple words, the ABC model helps you monitor your self-talk and discover patterns of beliefs that color the interpretation of events. Ultimately, having greater awareness of your self-talk is the first step to changing your counterproductive thoughts (Reivich & Schatté, 2002).

How to use ABC in your life? (Reivich & Schatté, 2002)

Step 1 (A): Think of a recent activating event (A) – a situation that caught you off guard, pushed your buttons, and presented itself as a challenge or adversity. Record your description of what happened objectively and without evaluating it. Stick to the facts (what, who, where, when, how).

Step 2 (B): Once you've captured the activating event, make notes of your interpretation and thoughts / beliefs of it (B). What did you think as the event unfolded? What self-talk was running through your head at that time? What was your inner voice saying about why the event happened? Don't censor – make a note of your thoughts as closely as possible to how they occurred in the situation.

Step 3 (C): After you've captured what happened and what you thought of it, identify how it made you feel and act as a consequence (C). What did you feel and how did you react in response to the event? Was your emotion mild, moderate, or intense?

Step 4 (A-B-C): Connect the dots between the activating event (A), how you interpreted it (B), and how that affected the way you felt and acted (C). Were your thoughts helpful or harmful? Did they spark a positive or a negative reaction? Do you notice any patterns of thoughts that help you better understand why you feel and act in certain ways?

Example:

Activating event (A) Describe a recent event objectively. Stick to the facts.

I went out on a birthday party and no one started a conversation with me the whole evening.

Beliefs (B)

I am boring
I lack social skills
They must not like me
I don't have any friends
Will I ever find anyone who likes me?

Consequences (C)

Feeling sad
Feeling lonely
Isolating myself
Leaving the party earlier
Ruminating for a week after

Common belief themes and consequences. Research has identified that certain beliefs are universally connected to specific feelings and reactions. These are called B-C connections, and they are common and universal. You may find them helpful in identifying thoughts behind certain feelings, and understanding why you feel in a certain way (Reivich & Schatté, 2002).

BELIEFS	CONSEQUENCES
Violation of your rights	Anger
Real-world loss / Loss of self-worth	Sadness, depression
Violation of another's rights	Guilt
Future threat	Anxiety, fear
Negative comparison to others	Embarrassment

There are two main uses of the B-C connections:

1. Disentangle the mixture of emotions you experience when faced with adversity (Why am I feeling this way?)
2. Identify the beliefs that are causing you to get "stuck" in a particular emotion (What belief patterns might evoke certain feelings that I often experience?)

ABC activity. Practice the ABC model, following the detailed steps and using the table below as a helpful tool to structure your description of the event, the beliefs you had about it, and the consequences that occurred. Note that the ABC model can be applied retrospectively (when reflecting on events of the past to better understand how your patterns of thought and related reactions) and proactively (when thinking of an upcoming event to cultivate thoughts that support your optimal functioning).

ABC Practice - Retrospective

Describe a recent activating event:	
Beliefs: What self-talk was running through your head at that time? What was your inner voice saying about why the event happened?	Consequences: What did you feel and how did you react in response to the event? Was your emotion mild, moderate, or intense?

ABC Practice - Proactive

Describe an upcoming event:	
Beliefs: What thought will generate the desired emotions, behavior, and physiology? Where do you focus your mental energy in order to trigger the consequences that are optimal for you?	Consequences: What emotions, behavior, and physiology will be most productive in this upcoming event? How would you like to feel and behave?
<div style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">2</div>	<div style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">1</div>
This time, fill in the Beliefs only after you have generated the desired consequences.	This time, fill in the Consequences first.

(K. Reivich & J. Salzberg, personal communication, March 26, 2017)

Thinking Traps

What are Thinking Traps? Thinking traps are unhelpful thinking patterns and cognitive fallacies that cause us to make mistakes as we try to make sense of our world. Such mistakes may include missing or overlooking pieces of information, as well as interpreting information in a way that confirms our pre-existing beliefs and hypotheses. Thinking traps reflect our tendency to take shortcuts in our thinking and they affect our capacity to make accurate assessments of what happens in our lives, especially in times of stress and adversity. Thinking traps are common and most of us tend to be most susceptible to two or three traps (Reivich & Schatté, 2002).

How to avoid Thinking Traps? First, why is it important to avoid thinking traps? Because they cause inaccurate thinking and counterproductive thoughts that are not serving us well in making correct judgments about the world. Thus, thinking traps hamper our capacity to respond to challenges and adversities, and they may make us less resilient in challenging times. You can learn to avoid thinking traps and correct thinking errors by challenging the accuracy of your thoughts and evaluating their usefulness. The first step is to start asking yourself some simple questions to help you get out of the traps you fall into (see table below; Reivich & Schatté, 2002).

Below is a table of most common thinking traps and questions that can help you identify if you fall in some of them as you make judgments and interpretations about events in your life. These are most common thinking traps, yet you might discover that you have other thinking traps you often fall into – in such case, take a mental note and jot down your own questions that help you get out of the trap.

Most common thinking traps

Thinking trap	Description	Ask yourself
Jumping to conclusions	Making assumptions without relevant data	<i>What is the evidence?</i>
Mind reading	Believing that you know what others are thinking or expecting that others know what you are thinking	<i>Did I express myself? Did I ask for information? What can I say or ask to increase my understanding of the situation?</i>
Personalizing	Attributing the cause of an event to one's own personal characteristics or actions	<i>How did others or circumstances contribute to what happened?</i>
Externalizing	Attributing the cause of an event to other people or to circumstances	<i>How did I contribute to what happened?</i>
Overgeneralizing	Forming global beliefs about oneself or others on the basis of a single situation; attributing the cause of an event to one's own character or the character of others, rather than on specific behavior.	<i>Is there a specific behavior that explains the situation? Is it fair to judge myself/others based on one incident?</i>
Tunnel vision	Focusing on a specific detail or part of a situation, while screening out, overlooking, or ignoring other aspects.	<i>What nuance am I missing? What other important pieces of information might be there?</i>
Magnifying and minimizing	Evaluating yourself, others, or a situation by magnifying the negative and/or minimizing the positive.	<i>What positive events occurred? Am I dismissing the importance of other factors?</i>
Emotional reasoning	Drawing conclusions (which may turn out to be false) about the nature of the world based on one's emotional state.	<i>Are my feelings accurately reflecting the facts of the situation? Have there been times when my feelings didn't reflect the truth?</i>

Challenging Beliefs through ABCDE

Identifying thought patterns, thinking traps, and iceberg beliefs can significantly enhance resilience as it enables us to have a fuller and more accurate picture of ourselves. The next step is to determine what we can change to improve our optimal functioning. Our willingness and capacity to revisit our beliefs, change them, and generate new ones plays a key role in resilience (Reivich and Shatté, 2002). The ABCDE model builds on the ABC and extends it by adding D for disputing one's beliefs and E for energizing the outcome of redirected beliefs (Seligman, 1998).

A: Describe the activating event and be as descriptive as possible (when, what, where, who, how).

.....

B: Write down the thoughts you had right in that moment – don't use self-censoring.

.....

C: What were your emotions and behavior in the situation? How did you react?

.....

D: Dispute your beliefs about the causes and implications of the event.

Evidence: What is the evidence *for* and *against* your beliefs?

Alternatives: Are there any alternative explanations for what happened? Scan all possible contributing causes by focusing on the *changeable*, *specific*, and *non-personal* causes.

Implications: What are the implications of the event? What is the *best-case and worst-case* scenario? What is the *most-likely* scenario?

Usefulness: How *helpful* are the beliefs you have about the event? Is there a more *balanced* way to explain what happened?

.....

E: Energize revisited beliefs by generating new solutions and committing to next steps.

.....

Appendix E

Optimism

What is Explanatory Style?

In many life situations, especially in moments of setbacks and adversity, we tend to ask ourselves, “Why did this happen to me?”. How we explain the cause of events to ourselves, either positive or negative, defines our explanatory style, and influences how we are affected by these events and what expectations we set for the future (Gillham, Shatté, Reivich, & Seligman, 2011).

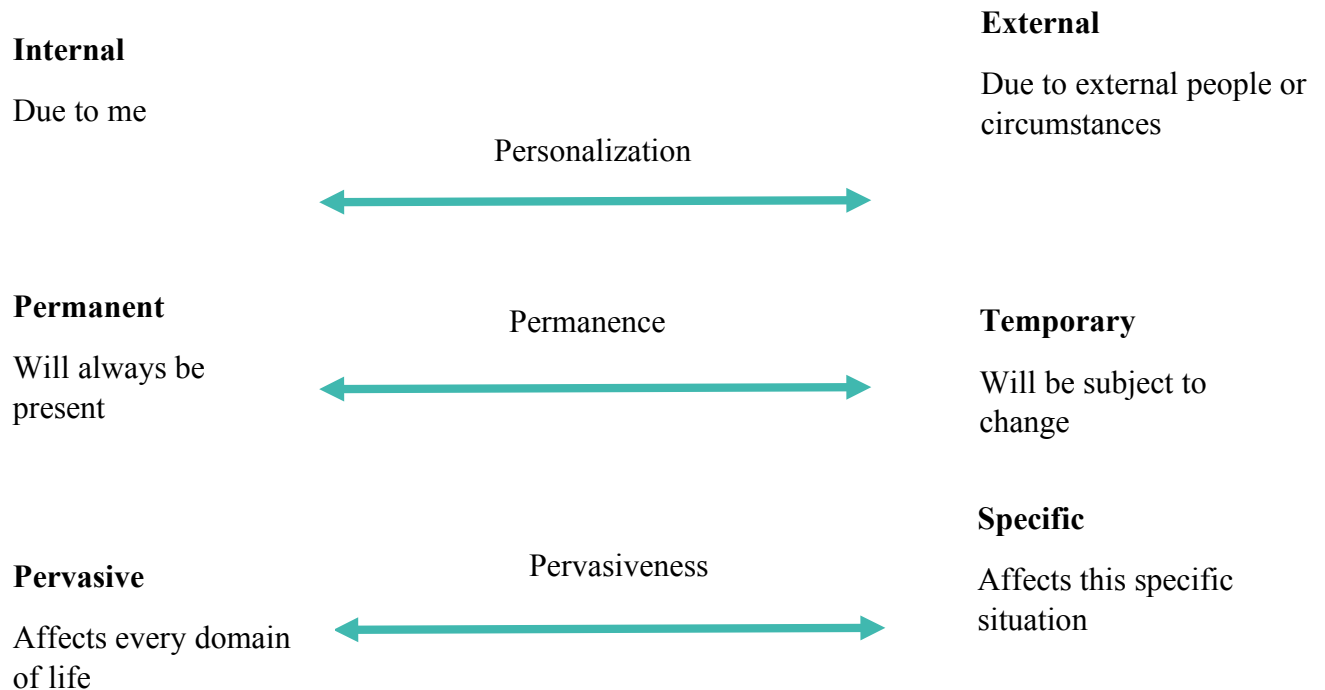
Why Care about Explanatory Style?

Our explanatory style is related to optimism and pessimism – the way we explain past events to ourselves influences what expectations we form about the future, and these expectations refer to optimism (expectations of positive outcomes in the future) or pessimism (expectations of negative outcomes in the future). Explanatory style and optimism are researched extensively and there is robust scientific evidence on the benefits of using an optimistic explanatory style (Gillham et al., 2001; Schulman, Castellon, & Seligman, 1989):

- Associated with higher levels of **motivation, achievement, productivity, and physical well-being**
- Related to **lower risk of depressive symptoms**
- Predictive of **marital satisfaction**
- Linked to increased **coping capacity** in the face of adversity
- Associated with a **reduced sense of perceived helplessness** in difficult situations

Explanatory style: Optimistic vs Pessimistic

We explain to ourselves why different events happened by attributing the cause along three different dimensions (Seligman, 1998):



	Optimistic explanatory style ☺	Pessimistic explanatory style ☹
Attribution of positive events (+)	Internal Permanent Pervasive	External Temporary Specific
Attribution of negative events (-)	External Temporary Specific	Internal Permanent Pervasive

Explanatory style – optimistic vs pessimistic

Explanatory Style Activity**1. Think about and describe an event that you recently experienced as a:**

Recent success:

.....

.....

Recent adversity / setback:

.....

.....

2. Provide reasons for why you think the event happened (what were the causes).

Recent success – causes:

.....

.....

Recent adversity / setback – causes:

.....

.....

3. Review your reasons according to the three dimensions – personalization, permanence, and pervasiveness – and identify patterns of causal attribution:

- *Personalization*: Internal (It's all about me) vs External (It's about the others and external circumstances)
- *Permanence*: Permanent (It will always be this way) vs Temporary (It can change in the future)
- *Pervasiveness*: Pervasive (It affects all areas of my life) vs Specific (It affects this specific situation / area of life)

4. Using the three dimensions, generate alternative explanations.

Recent success – alternative explanations:

Personalization.....

Permanence:

Pervasiveness:

Recent adversity / setback – alternative explanations:

Personalization:

Permanence:

Pervasiveness:

5. **Review the causes in each dimension and generate a more *balanced and accurate* explanation for why the event happened.**

Recent success:

.....
.....

Recent adversity / setback:

.....
.....

*This exercise is based on findings on explanatory style by Seligman (1998).

Appendix F

Enhancing Hope through Goal Setting

Hope is inherently related to goal attainment through pathways and agency, so one way to enhance hope is through setting reasonable goals, contingency planning, and when needed, re-goaling (Lopez et al., 2004; Luthans & Jensen, 2002; Snyder, 2000). The following activity guides you through a structured process of setting SMART goals (Doran, 1981; Latham, 2003), in other words, goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-specific, as well as reflecting on obstacles that could possibly occur and producing alternative routes around these obstacles. Research suggests that making such if-then plans facilitates goal attainment (Gollwitzer & Oettingen, 2011).

Goal-Setting Activity

Step 1: Goals. Set a SMART goal for your personal or professional life and refine it so it fits the following criteria:

Specific: Define your precise objective – what needs to happen, when, how, where, and who is involved?

Measurable: How will you know that your goal is achieved? What metrics could you use to measure the outcome?

Achievable: Is the goal realistic and within your reach, given where you are now?

Relevant: The goal must be relevant to you and aligned with other larger goals. Does your new goal fit into what you are trying to accomplish in the longer term? How will it contribute to it? Is your motivation intrinsically-driven, or there are external circumstances that influence your goal setting?

Time-specific: What is the concrete timeline for your goal? What specific date / time will you commit to?

.....
.....

Step 2: Obstacles. What obstacles may prevent you from accomplishing your goal?

Are there any internal or external factors that may affect your progress towards the goal?

.....
.....

Step 3: Contingency plan. What can you do to overcome your obstacles? What alternative routes might you take towards goal attainment? Make if/then plans:

If/When (obstacle),
then I will(action to overcome obstacle).

Step 4: Next steps

Commit to your immediate next steps and start energizing actions towards the goal.

.....
.....

*This exercise incorporates findings from the SMART goal-setting model of Doran (1981) and the WOOP method of Gollwitzer and Oettingen (2011).

Appendix G

Positive Emotions

Savoring

Savoring is defined as the capacity to direct attention to, appreciate, and enhance positive experiences (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). The ability to savor positive experiences is one of the most important ingredients in subjective well-being. It can be experienced in three different temporal dimensions – reminiscing about past positive experiences and rekindling positive feelings, savoring, intensifying and prolonging positive experiences in the present moment, and anticipating future positive experiences. Bryant (2003) suggests that there are four types of savoring:

- *Basking*: being receptive to praise and congratulations
- *Thanksgiving*: experiencing and expressing gratitude
- *Marveling*: losing self in the wonder of the experience
- *Luxuriating*: engaging the senses fully

Strategies for savoring (Bryant & Veroff, 2007):

1. Sharing with others: seeking out others to share experience and thinking about sharing the memory
2. Memory building: actively collecting and storing “mental photographs” for future recall
3. Self-congratulation: being proud of oneself and congratulating oneself for achievements and personal successes
4. Comparing: using downward comparison and reminding oneself that things could be worse

5. Sharpening of sensory perceptions: slowing down and intensifying pleasure by selectively focusing on certain stimuli
6. Absorption: turning off mental chatter and practicing mindfulness without cognitive reflection
7. Behavioral expression: laughing, jumping for joy, and using the body to express positive sensations
8. Temporal awareness: reminding oneself how fleeting the moment is and inviting oneself to enjoy the present
9. Counting blessings: acknowledging and expressing gratitude for what one has
10. Avoiding kill-joy thinking: avoiding negative thoughts related to what one should be doing instead, negative self-talk, upward comparison, etc.

Savoring Activity. The following activity aims to help participants to learn more about their preferred form of savoring and come up with new ideas of savoring more in their daily lives.

Step 1: Which of the four types of savoring – basking, thanksgiving, marvelling, or luxuriating – is your personal preference? How can you do more of it? What new strategies can you employ to bring more savoring of this type in your day?

Step 2: Which types of savoring are rather unusual for you? What strategies could you employ to experiment with savoring that is unusual for you? What new activities can you undertake to diversify your savoring experiences?

Step 3: Reflect on your savoring experiences and continue to explore new opportunities for savoring. Take a note of the effects of savoring and your emotional, mental and physical well-being. Think of opportunities to bring more savoring to your day.

Gratitude

Cultivating gratitude and appreciating one's life has profound effects for one's emotional, mental, and physical well-being. In research, practicing gratitude has been empirically linked to increased experiences of positive emotions, enhancing self-worth and self-esteem, effective coping with stress and challenges, positive adaptation after adversity, and stronger social bonds with others (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). People who are consistently grateful have been found to be happier, more hopeful, and more energetic.

There are many ways in which people can express gratitude – through verbal communication with others, writing a letter of appreciation, counting one's blessings, etc. This paper suggests two activities which have been shown to have lasting effects on individuals' well-being – Three Good Things and Gratitude Visit (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005).

Three Good Things

Step one. Each night, before you go to sleep, think of three good things that happened today. It may be relatively small things (I had a good cup of coffee in the morning) or bigger things (I helped a friend of mine solve a difficult personal problem). Anything from the most mundane to the most exciting experiences can work as long as you regard them as good and positive.

Step two. Write down these three positive things.

Step three. Reflect on why each good thing happened. Determining the “why” of the event is the most important part of the exercise. For example, you might say that you had a good cup of coffee because you made a conscious choice to treat yourself nicely and take the time to visit your favourite café before work. Or you might say that you were able to help

your friend because you have a generous heart or a good capacity to problem-solve. You determine the reasons for each event, based on what makes sense to you.

Step four. Observe how this evening practice impacts you – how does it make you feel, does it improve the quality of your sleep, does it enable you to focus on the good things in your life? Pay attention to how your outlook changes as you continue the practice.

Gratitude Visit

Step one. Think of a person in your life who has done something good for you, to whom you have not yet expressed your gratitude. This person may be a friend, family members, colleague, teacher, or mentor.

Step two. Write him or her a letter with the intention of reading it out loud to this person, if possible. Be as concrete and specific as possible – describe in detail what the person has done for you and how this has affected your life for the better. You may want to describe what you are doing in life now and how frequently you remember their act of kindness or generosity.

Step three. If possible, take the time to personally deliver the letter to this person and read it out loud to him/her. If you deliver the letter personally, take your time reading it and pay attention to the reaction of both you and the recipient. If a visit is not possible, you can read the letter over the phone or send an email and follow up by a phone call after a few days.

Kindness

Performing acts of kindness is linked to a number of positive outcomes: it increases psychological well-being and reduce negative symptoms even in difficult situations; provides a welcome distraction from one's own troubles; and promotes more positive self-perceptions, as well as a greater sense of usefulness, optimism, and confidence. Furthermore, doing acts of kindness fosters a sense of interdependence, cooperation, and support in one's social community, thus implying that in times of need, one could also rely on support from others (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

Performing Acts of Kindness Activity. There are many ways to practice kindness in our daily lives, from small gestures to bigger good deeds. The following exercise is one example of engaging in kind acts and has found significant empirical support of its positive effects on well-being (Della Porta & Lyubomirsky, 2012):

- In the next six weeks, perform five acts of kindness per week for another person (a friend, family member, colleague, neighbour, stranger, etc.). You can choose different people and note that the recipients don't need to be aware of your acts of kindness.
- An act of kindness can be as simple as holding a door, offering someone a cup of coffee, making a phone call to cheer up a friend, helping a colleague with work, introducing two people to each other, sharing advice, etc. Try to diversify both the acts of kindness you engage in and the recipients of your kindness.
- At the end of each week, reflect on your experience. What effects could you notice on yourself and on others? Did practicing kindness help you feel more connected to others? What acts of kindness gave you most energy? What did you enjoy most about practicing kindness?

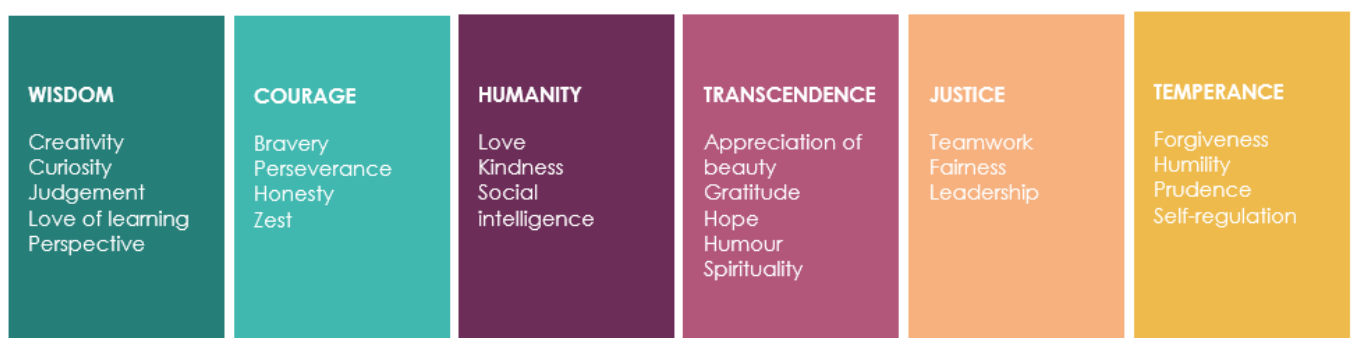
Appendix H

Character Strengths

What are VIA Character Strengths?

The VIA Classification is a commonly used framework for helping individuals discover, explore, and use their best qualities, namely, their character strengths (Niemiec, 2013). The VIA Classification contains 24 strengths of character, organized under six core virtues - wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence – found across religions, cultures, nations, and belief systems. The classification is the result of a 3-year project, led by two prominent figures in the field of positive psychology, Martin Seligman and Chris Peterson, who did an extensive historical review and analysis of virtues and positive qualities across different domains, including philosophy, virtue ethics, moral education, psychology, and theology (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

In simple words, these 24 character strengths are pathways to the six virtues mentioned above and as such are considered the basic building blocks of human goodness and flourishing. In fact, VIA stands for *Values in Action*, therefore, character strengths are stable, universal personality traits that reflect the core of who we are as human beings through thinking (cognition), feeling (affect), willing (volition), and action (behavior) (VIA Institute, 2017).



Character Strengths and Virtues Classification

Signature Strengths

Signature strengths are those character strengths in the list of 24 that are most essential to who we are. In addition, they are strengths that usually (but not always) appear toward the top of one's profile of results after taking the VIA Survey. Signature strengths meet the following criteria (Peterson & Seligman, 2004):

- They feel authentic to who you are (“this is the real me”)
- They feel natural and easy to use
- Using your signature strengths energizes and excites you
- You have a sense of yearning to act in accordance with this strength, and using it seems inevitable
- You are intrinsically motivated to use the strength

Why use your signature strengths?

Character strengths and signature strengths in particular are researched extensively and there's a robust body of scientific evidence on the benefits of using our signature strengths. Here are some of the positive outcomes you may expect (VIA Institute, 2017):

- Using one's signature strengths in a new and unique way is related to **increased happiness and decreased depression** for 6 months
- Deploying one's signature strengths at work is linked with **greater work satisfaction, greater well-being, and higher meaning in life**
- Using signature strengths **enhances one's well-being** because signature strengths help us make progress on our goals and meet our basic needs for independence, relationship, and competence
- Character strengths **buffer people from the negative effects** of vulnerabilities and stress

- Using signature strengths and spotting strengths in others are related to **relationship satisfaction**

Character Strengths Activities

Aware – Explore – Apply. The VIA-based *Aware – Explore – Apply* model (VIA Institute, 2017) provides a structured and effective way for identifying your character strengths and developing strategies for leveraging these strengths to overcome obstacles and reach goals. Follow the process as described below to expand your understanding of your strengths and generate new ideas for using them in your daily life.

Step 1: Aware. Becoming aware of your strengths is the first step. Start by taking the VIA Inventory Survey online (VIA Institute, 2017) and reflecting on the results. Did the results surprise you? What do you think you are really good at? What character strengths do you use when you are at your best? What do people often compliment you about? What character strengths on your VIA Inventory do you most resonate with? Can you recall a time when you recently used some of these character strengths? What do you consider as your signature strengths?

Step 2: Explore. The second step includes a deeper observation, examining your life, and self-reflection. You may consider the following questions useful in your exploration. What character strengths do you most use at work; how about at home? Recall recent successes you experienced – what character strengths did you use then? Recall recent setbacks you faced – what character strengths did you use in overcoming obstacles on your way or adapting to the new situation? When you are at great difficulty, what strengths do you tend to forget about? When you are happiest, what strengths are you deploying?

Step 3: Apply. The last step entails putting strengths to practice in intentional ways that may enhance your capacity to overcome challenges and improve well-being. In this phase, identify a future challenge or a stretch goal and think about how you can manage by

deploying some of your signature strengths. What strengths are best to use in each of the situations? How can you apply your signature strengths to your thoughts, actions, and behaviors as you handle each situation? What other strengths could you use to achieve your objectives? Try to be as specific as possible in the development of ideas and plans for using strengths.

GROW. In addition to the Aware – Explore – Apply model, another useful framework for using strengths towards achieving meaningful goals or solving problems is the GROW (Goals, Reality, Obstacles/Options, Way Forward) model, developed by Alexander Graham and popularized by Whitmore (Whitmore, 2002).

Step 1: Goals. This step involves setting a goal that you wish to achieve. Here, it is important to determine whether character strengths are the means or the ends of the goal. For example, are you trying to improve your relationships with peers at work (in which case character strengths are a means to get there) or you are striving to improve your character strength of gratitude, perseverance, hope, etc.?

Step 2: Reality. This step includes taking a stock of your situation and understanding where you are now in relation to your goal. What is the gap between your current state and the desired state?

Step 3: Obstacles / Options. What are possible obstacles that may hinder your success and what alternative options exist for goal attainment? How can you work around barriers?

Step 4: Way Forward. Review your reflections above and generate specific actions steps towards achieving the goal.

*This exercise is based on research and suggestions from the VIA Pro Practitioner's Guide (VIA Institute, 2017).



The VIA Classification of 24 Character Strengths

ViaCharacter.org

WISDOM	CREATIVITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Originality • Adaptive • Ingenuity 	CURIOSITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest • Novelty-Seeking • Exploration • Openness 	JUDGMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Thinking • Thinking Things Through • Open-mindedness 	LOVE OF LEARNING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mastering New Skills & Topics • Systematically Adding to Knowledge 	PERSPECTIVE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wisdom • Providing Wise Counsel • Taking the Big Picture View
COURAGE	BRAVERY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valor • Not Shrinking from Fear • Speaking Up for What's Right 	PERSEVERANCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistence • Industry • Finishing What One Starts 	HONESTY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authenticity • Integrity 	ZEST <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vitality • Enthusiasm • Vigor • Energy • Feeling Alive 	
HUMANITY	LOVE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both Loving and Being Loved • Valuing Close Relations with Others 	KINDNESS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generosity • Nurturance • Care & Compassion • Altruism • "Niceness" 			SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aware of the Motives/Feelings of Self/Others • Knowing what Makes Other People Tick
JUSTICE	TEAMWORK <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizenship • Social Responsibility • Loyalty 			FAIRNESS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just • Not Letting Feelings Bias Decisions About Others 	LEADERSHIP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing Group Activities • Encouraging a Group to Get Things Done
TEMPERANCE		FORGIVENESS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mercy • Accepting Others' Shortcomings • Giving People a Second Chance 	HUMILITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modesty • Letting One's Accomplishments Speak for Themselves 	PRUDENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careful • Cautious • Not Taking Undue Risks 	SELF-REGULATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Control • Disciplined • Managing Impulses & Emotions
TRANSCENDENCE	APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY & EXCELLENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awe • Wonder • Elevation 	GRATITUDE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thankful for the Good • Expressing Thanks • Feeling Blessed 	HOPE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimism • Future-Mindedness • Future Orientation 	HUMOR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playfulness • Bringing Smiles to Others • Lighthearted 	SPIRITUALITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religiousness • Faith • Purpose • Meaning

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Appendix I

Positive Relationships

Capitalization and Active-Constructive Responding (ACR)

What is capitalization and why do it? When good things happen, people often reach out to others to share the news of a positive event. This process has been called *capitalization* (Langston, 1994) and has been linked to a number of positive outcomes. Personal benefits linked to capitalization include increased positive emotions, subjective well-being, self-esteem, and decreased loneliness. Relationship benefits associated with sharing positive narratives include increased relationship satisfaction, intimacy, commitment, sense of belonging, closeness, and stability (Gable & Reis, 2010). While these associated effects are independent of the positive events themselves, they are largely dependent on the reaction of the recipient (Gable, Gonzaga, & Strachman, 2006).

Four types of responding to good news. There are four key types of responding to good news shared by others: active-constructive, passive constructive, active-destructive, and passive-destructive (Gable et al., 2006)

	Constructive	Destructive
Active	<p><i>Authentic support</i> </p> <p>Sounds like: Wow! That is great news! How are you feeling? Tell me more!</p>	<p><i>Quashing/Demeaning the event</i> </p> <p>Sounds like: Boy, that's going to mean even more stress...I don't envy you!</p>
Passive	<p><i>Quiet, understated support</i> </p> <p>Sounds like: That's nice.</p>	<p><i>Ignoring the event</i> </p> <p>Sounds like: Listen to what happened to me!</p>

Response types to positive news

Active-constructive responding (ACR). Active-constructive responding (ACR) is the only style that is associated with personal well-being and higher relationship quality (Gable et al., 2006). Some signals of ACR include:

- Affirming the positive news with enthusiastic comments
- Asking inquisitive questions and showing interest in hearing more to enable the narrator to savor the positive experience
- Using non-verbal communication such as eye contact, body gestures, and tone of voice to convey interest

How to bring more capitalization & ACR to my life? How we respond to good news of others is a bigger predictor of relationship satisfaction and stability than how we respond to negative event discussions (Gable et al., 2006). Since sharing good news and responding actively and constructively are associated with many positive outcomes on the personal and relationship level, you may want to bring more awareness and attention to these processes and enhance your daily experience of capitalizing and responding.

Here is a list of questions that may help you in reflecting on and enhancing capitalization and ACR in your life:

- How much do you capitalize?
- Are there certain people you seek out to capitalize with?
- What do you capitalize about – do you notice any recurrent themes?
- What attributes of the people and the environment encourage you to share more good news? What circumstances impeded it?
- What emotions, thoughts, or behaviors support your ability to engage in ACR? What circumstances impeded it?
- How do various types of responding make you feel and how do they affect your relationships with others?

- What character strengths could you use to stay more in the capitalization and ACR zone?

Strengths Spotting

The language of character strengths serves as a powerful medium which enables us to identify, communicate, and appreciate the best qualities we observe in ourselves and others (Peterson, 2006). Indeed, recognizing and confirming character strengths in others, in other words, exercising strengths spotting, requires us to notice when others put their values and good character into action, and thus we learn to become mindful of and to affirm the good in others (Niemiec, 2014). The following practice can help you improve your strengths-spotting ability:

Step 1: Build a language. First, you need to become fluent with the language of character strengths so you know what you are looking for. The VIA Classification of 24 strengths (see Appendix H) provides a framework for building a meaningful and systematic vocabulary.

Step 2: Enhance your observation and listening skills. What do strengths look like in words and in actions? The idea is to fine tune your ability to “detect” strengths on both a verbal and nonverbal language. Nonverbal cues may include body posture, eye contact, smiling or laughing, increased use of hand gestures, and facial expressions of positive emotions such as excitement, joy, hope, and gratitude. Verbal cues include voice intonation, vocabulary and clarity of speech, pace, and delivery (e.g. slow vs fast, chaotic vs methodical, excited vs calm,).

Step 3: Label and explain character strength behaviors. Name the strengths you have observed and then provide the rationale for your observation of how the strength was demonstrated. If appropriate, you may express appreciation for the person’s strength. For

example, “I was impressed by how hard you continued to work, despite all difficulties in the team. You showed great perseverance!”

Step 4: Build a habit for strengths spotting. Practice strengths spotting at any occasion - in work meetings, with friends, or at home. Like any skill, strength spotting can be improved with continued practice. You may want to keep a journal or write down notes related to the practice of strengths spotting if you wish to deepen your observations and insights.

*This exercise is based on research and interventions from VIA Institute (2017)

Appendix J

Meaning-making through writing

Expressive writing and storytelling are powerful tools for reflection and integration of difficult experiences within a larger life pattern (Smyth and Pennebaker, 1999). The act of “telling the story” or constructing a narrative about a distressing experience can lead individuals to come to new insights about the meaning of the event, reappraise its causes and implications, and possibly discover “silver linings”. Furthermore, it can help people accept the situation and release some of the emotional burden, thus allowing them to move past the experience (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

The following exercise is suggested for making sense of difficult experiences through writing:

- Recall a difficult experience such as loss, setback, or disappointment. Describe what happened and what feelings and thoughts you have about it.
- Reflect and write about how the event fits in your life story. What lessons did you derive from it? How might it connect to who you are today? How does it connect your past with your present and your future? How does it affect who you are today and who you want to be tomorrow?
- Reflect and write about potentially positive outcomes of the event. Did you grow in any way? Did you gain new strength? Did you discover qualities you didn’t know you had? Did you form any new relationships or reinforced existing ones? Did your life priorities change? In what ways?

Appendix K

High-Quality Connections

High-quality connections (HQC) are the micro-moments of relationships. They are short, dyadic interactions that generate positive experience for both individuals and are marked by a sense of greater energy, positive regard, and mutuality (Stephens, Heaphy, & Dutton, 2011). There are three key behavioural mechanisms through which HQCs are built and strengthened – respectful engagement, task enabling, and trusting. The table below gives an overview of the three mechanisms, together with simple actions that can be taken by individuals in their organizations:

Strategies for Building HCQs in the workplace (Dutton, 2003)		
Respectful engagement	Task enabling	Building trust
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be present for others • Behaving genuinely • Communicate affirmation and recognition • Listen attentively • Fostering supportive communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching • Designing • Advocating • Accommodating • Nurturing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share with others • Self-disclosure • Solicit feedback and act on it

HCQs Activity

- **Choose a connection to work on.** Identify a place in your professional life where the quality of connection between participants is less-than-ideal. You may choose to focus on one-to-one interactions with a colleague or a group setting. Describe the current state.
- **Design a plan.** Strategize about how you could improve the quality of the connection. What steps and changes might you make? How would you measure their effectiveness?

- **Implement the plan.** Carry out the actual intervention you have designed.
- **Reflect on the intervention.** What are your key insights from this intervention? What worked and what didn't work? What immediate changes did you observe about the quality of connection? Were there any surprising outcomes? What can you do better next time? How can you sustain the quality of the connection?

*This exercise is based on MAPP 709 Course Homework Assignments (Master of Applied Positive Psychology, University of Pennsylvania)

Appendix L

Meaning in Work and Job Crafting

Job crafting refers to the creative process people undertake to shape, redesign, and mold their jobs in ways that can foster job satisfaction, engagement, resilience, and thriving at work (Berg, Dutton, & Wrzesniewski, 2013). Employees can use job crafting to customize their jobs to better fit their strengths, interests, and passions, and thereby build a more meaningful connection to work that can serve as a protective factor in times of stress. Through job crafting, they can reframe their work from being simply a “job” or a “career” to a “calling” that gives their professional lives meaning and purpose.

There are three major ways in which people can craft their jobs: *task crafting* (altering tasks or the way they are performed), *relational crafting* (changing the nature or extent of interactions with others), and *cognitive crafting* (changing the way one thinks about the tasks and relationships, or the job as a whole).

To facilitate this process for organizations and their employees, Berg, Dutton and Wrzesniewski (2013) have designed a Job Crating Exercise workbook which includes a step-by-step manual for crafting work in alignment with individual values, strengths, and passions. The workbook can be purchased online at:

www.positiveorgs.bus.umich.edu/cpo-tools/job-crafting-exercise.



Job Crafting Activity (Berg, Dutton, & Wrzesniewski, 2013)

- Complete the Job Crafting Exercise workbook and make an After Diagram of your job that reflects the connection between job tasks and your values, strengths, and passions, as well as your relationships with others involved in your work.
- What specific actions can you take to make your After Diagram a reality? In particular, what are three specific actions you can take in the next week and month?
- What specific people might be able to make your After Diagram a reality? How and when might you ask each of these people for help?
- What will be some of the main challenges or barriers involved in making your After Diagram a reality? What are 2 or 3 strategies that might help you avoid or overcome these challenges or barriers?

Appendix M

Positive Emotions in the Workplace

In organizational settings, positive emotions have been empirically linked to increases in social support, more accurate and careful decision-making, better business performance, prosocial behavior, and more creative and flexible thinking (Staw & Barsade, 1993; Fredrickson, 2003). Simply put, positive emotions like joy, interest, gratitude, pride, contentment, and love can transform not only individuals, but also organizations through making their members more flexible, adaptive, creative, empathic, and interconnected.

The following activities can be undertaken by individuals who wish to reinforce positive emotions in their organizations through simple yet effective actions:

- **Elicit positive emotions in meetings:** Infuse work meetings with positive emotions through simple practices such as *appreciative check-in* (opening meetings by publicly expressing appreciation of other team members), “*what went well*” type of questions (draw attention to positive experiences, strengths, and possibilities), and *playful ice-breakers* (use humour to make meetings lively, fun, and energizing).
- **Make gratitude easy to express:** A simple practice like the “*Gratitude Jar*” can serve as an invitation for employees to write brief notes of appreciation to other colleagues. The Gratitude Jar can be placed in common areas for social interaction, such as the lounge or coffee area, and offer a quick and easy way for employees to write brief notes of appreciation which are then put in the jar and can be read at a team gathering once a month. This activity may encourage even relatively shy colleagues to join in cultivating and expressing gratitude to others.
- **Celebrate others:** Celebrate *small wins* of others, express appreciation of their qualities and achievements, and find various ways to congratulate them (in meetings, in one-to-one conversations, via email, etc.).